What happened to Wigglesworth

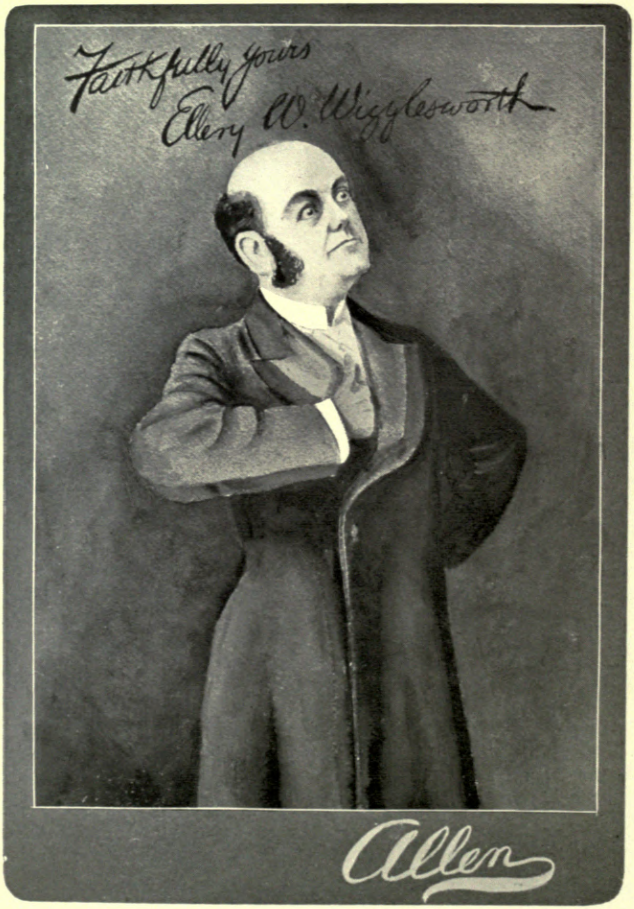
W.O. Fuller

60

To Mrs May

With love and best wishes
from her Brother x Mac -

What happened to Wigglesworth


Faithfully Yours
Ellery W. Wigglesworth
Allen

What happened to Wigglesworth

by W. O. Fuller

Illustrated by
E. D. Allen

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SECOND EDITION

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Playwrights desiring to adapt them for the stage should address the author, enclosing stamp.

To the wise woman who knoweth her own husband

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Preface

WHEN Mr. Wigglesworth was enjoying his newspaper notoriety, a great number of discerning women, representing every part of our country, were singularly cordial in their bearing toward that gentleman.

"How extraordinary," they would write, "that, never having met my husband, you yet could photograph him with such absolute fidelity. It would seem that you must have known him from a boy."

If still other women shall contrive to mark these chapters and leave them open on the sitting-room table; if thereby the husbands of our land shall have their natures softened, and, bursting into tears, resolve to lead a better life; if families thus benefited will only recommend the cure to others, so that in every home where the English language is tortured a copy of this book eventually shall come to be employed; I may feel that its preparation has been not altogether in vain.

W. O. F.

A Soft Word

ABRAHAM LINCOLN once said, "God must love plain people, because he made so many of them." Then humor must be heaven born, because it glorifies the commonplace. It does not deal in heroics; it is not given to the use of blank verse in ordinary conversation; it does not wrap itself in any grand and gloomy peculiarity to moralize over unutterable and unattainable things. It has little to do with kings and heroes, and other sublime persons who sit on thrones and stand on pedestals. But it walks in the streets where people come and go; it touches elbows with the crowd; it is at home in the drawing-room; it is at ease in the office, in the work-shop and the kitchen. It has love for "whatsoever things are lovely," pity for human sorrow, smart contempt for arrogance and pretence, and hatred for shams of whatever sort.

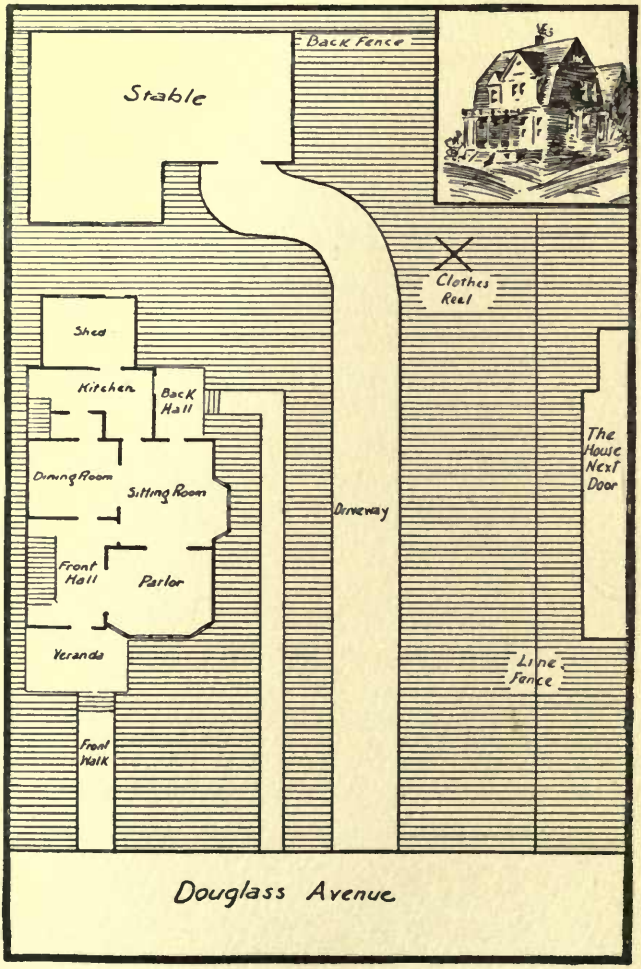
Mr. Fuller's humor has no need of the finger post of an introduction. His manner bears no stamp save that of his own personality. His characters introduce themselves as old friends, who try to surprise us by thinly disguised voices, by the change of a beard, or the innocent assumption of ignorance of our identity. The years, and the beard, and the "you-have-the advantage-of-me" cannot hide the sparkle of friendship in the eyes, and the masquerade under an assumed

name or expression merely emphasizes the identity and intensifies the joy of recognition. The people concerning whom Mr. Fuller writes in these chronicles, he would have us believe dwell in Maine. But I know them in Illinois; you have them in New York; they are your neighbors in California. We recognize them as old friends. Some busy years have separated us; a multitude of cares have swarmed into our lives and driven them out of our thought, and grateful are we that this apostle of humor suddenly turns the limelight of his humor upon the stage of this old work-a-day world of ours, revealing the little group of actors to our gaze, saying, "Did you ever see these people before?" And our ready, happy looks of glad and instant recognition contradict our "No we never did" that goes with the extended hand of welcome greeting. Into his book, Mr. Fuller has put the laughter of our own lives. Our highest and most grateful appreciation of what he has done, will be to take the laughter of his book into our own hearts.

Robert J. Burdette.

Cairo, Egypt.
February 6th 1901

Where it all happened



A certified copy from the records of the town clerk of Wigglesworth's native burgh in Knox county.

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The Hon. Ellery W. Wigglesworth. (Latest Photo by Allen.)

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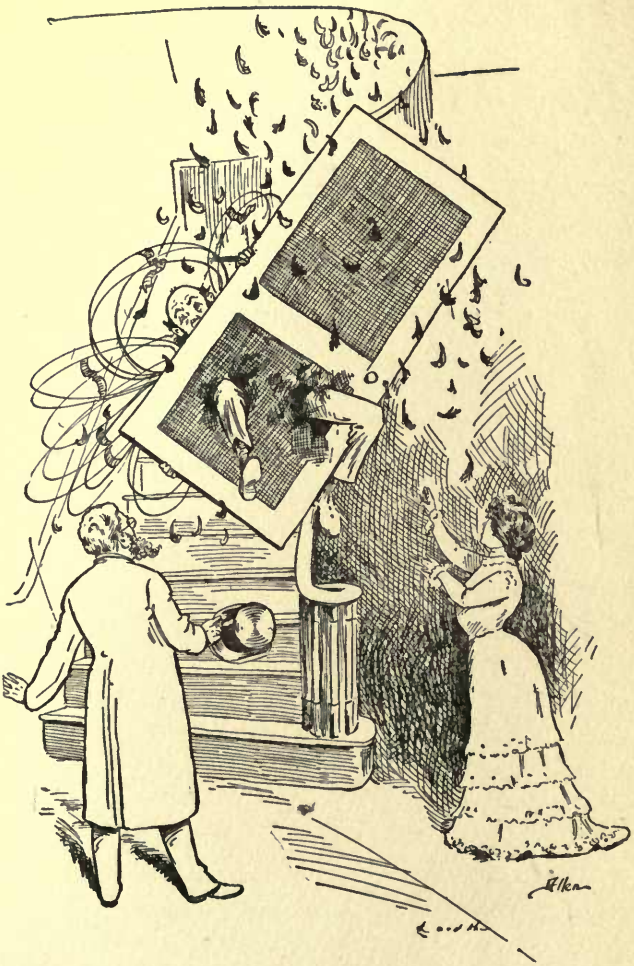
Chapter I

How Wigglesworth Put on the Screen Door



"Giving utterance to a blood-curdling laugh Mr. Wigglesworth and the screen door appeared to launch themselves into the air simultaneously."—*Page 25.*

What happened to Wigglesworth

CHAPTER I.— *How Wigglesworth Put on the Screen Door*

"OH, dear!" sighed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I do wish you'd put on the screen door, Ellery. The flies are just getting into the house awfully."

Mr. Wigglesworth puffed contentedly at his noonday cigar, while his wife continued to cavort about the hall, frenziedly directing the attention of a scared fly toward the front door with her apron.

"Do you hear, Ellery?" she called, aiming a desperate blow with the apron and knocking a portrait of Henry Clay into an italic position. The fly smiled.

"Ellery!" she called again, "do you hear?"

"Think I'm deef?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, with a tinge of sarcasm; "reckon I'm the stone sphinx of Rameses III., don't ye?"

"You don't answer me," pouted Mrs. Wigglesworth, waiting for the fly to alight. "I asked when you were going to put on the screen door?"

"Where is it?" asked her husband abruptly.

"I'm sure I don't know," returned Mrs. Wigglesworth, appearing in the door and leaving the fly to chuckle over his triumph.

"Well," said Mr. Wigglesworth testily, "how ye think I'm going to put on a screen door unless ye prance it out where a feller can get at it?"

"You took it off, the first of the winter," replied his wife; "don't you remember, Ellery, how late it got, with snow on the ground, and the neighbors laughing at you and saying you always leave it on after the snow flies — he-he-he!"

"He-he-he!" sneered Mr. Wigglesworth angrily; "you think you're mighty smart, don't ye, repeating somebody's old, stale chestnuts."

"I thought it a pretty good joke on you," said Mrs. Wigglesworth; "it was such a good pun, you know."

"Oh, yes, it was a great pun," snorted Mr. Wigglesworth, his face taking on a purple cast; "must have been great for Mrs. Wigglesworth to see it — must have loomed up like a stone church."

"I think I can see a joke as quick as most people," said that lady, with a show of spirit.

"Course you can," sniffed her husband; "you can see 'em quicker than the man that gets 'em up. Mrs. Wigglesworth, the long-expected American Humorist, author of Wigglesworth's Annual Almanac and other well-known works of humor. Now is the time to subscribe. That's what you are."

Enveloping himself in this cloud of persiflage Mr. Wigglesworth disappeared in it up the front stairs, while his wife proceeded to worry the fly from the parlor curtains, behind which covert he had disappeared in company with a mocking laugh.

Mr. Wigglesworth snatched his way through the attic in a hurried manner that left a disordered array of trunks and feather beds and antique clothing in his wake. Somebody must have broken into the house in the night and nailed down every window, so that the sun, smiting ambitiously at the shingles on the roof, diffused a mellow warmth through the attic, glueing Mr. Wigglesworth's garments to every available portion of that gentleman's anatomy and creating a storm center that seemed likely to be heard from directly.

"Gash-flummux the old screen!" yelled Mr. Wigglesworth, putting his foot into a bandbox that had belonged to his wife's Aunt Caroline, who had once died quite unexpectedly and left very little else. "What they got it hid away in this way for? What 's the use to poke it away up here in the air when they might have sunk an artesian well and buried it? Think I 'm Dr. Nansen, don't they?" and as he came to this bitter conclusion Mr. Wigglesworth struck his head with a hollow sound against an unexpected rafter and lit up the whole attic with a sudden, lurid glare.

"That 's it!" he shrieked, clawing an Early English hoopskirt from a nail and getting both arms mysteriously involved with it; "that 's the way!" he added, hoarsely, bursting open a discarded pillow with a kick and taking a large quantity of feathers into his distended nostrils.

But this brought him to the screen door. He remembered, now, how he had struggled up there with

it some months ago and flung it disdainfully into a corner. With a smothered shriek of rage mingled with feathers Mr. Wigglesworth fell upon the door and dragged it forward.

He didn't believe it possible — he confessed this, afterwards, to the doctor — that they had been housekeeping long enough to accumulate so many trunks and wooden boxes as that door attached itself to during its short but eventful journey toward the attic stairs. But Mr. Wigglesworth's blood was up and he'd have ripped the lids off twice as many trunks if the door had held together long enough for him to do so.

And now and then he would pause and clutch madly at the old hoopskirt, whose sinuous coils had enveloped his back and shoulders like the fangs of the deadly upas tree.

"Suffering Columbus!" Mr. Wigglesworth would shriek, and his voice would stir the clouds of feathers that had come out of that one little pillow and filled the entire attic. Even amid the perspiring horror of the situation Mr. Wigglesworth paused to note this singular circumstance.

He and the screen door got down the attic stairs together. He never understood how. People who subsequently called in to talk it over with Mrs. Wigglesworth, and were brought up stairs by that lady to view the situation, shook their heads and said that they didn't either. It was a crooked flight of stairs, with a pain that doubled them up in the

middle, and they were narrow and their whole general course instinctively suggested a Keeley cure. Mr. Wigglesworth said he remembered arriving at the top step, with the door in his grasp, and later he found himself wedged at the foot of the stairs, the door being still with him, but of what took place in the meantime he has n't the slightest recollection. One of the callers found a curly piece of sun-tanned cuticle hanging on a nail near where the stairs forked, which on being spread out was found to exactly fit an open place on the back of Mr. Wigglesworth's neck. So it is believed he must have passed down that way.

"Hark!" said the minister who had rung the bell in the course of his parish calls and was being smilingly admitted by Mrs. Wigglesworth; "what is that dreadful noise?"

It was Mr. Wigglesworth, struggling to his feet and making use of the first word that came to hand. Then he poked the end of the screen door over the bannister rail.

"What ye doing down there?" he yelled to his wife; "think I 'm going to give up my whole noon rest digging out screen doors for you?"

"Don't try to come down the stairs alone with it, I beg of you, Ellery," cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, clasping her hands; "you 'll scratch the wood-work and——"

Giving utterance to a blood-curdling laugh, Mr. Wigglesworth and the screen door appeared to launch themselves into the air simultaneously, like that

mythological god of something that the minister remembered speaking about in one of his sermons, but whose name for the moment escaped him. Mr. Wigglesworth's arms appeared to be fastened at the elbows with the hoopskirt that clustered about his back, somewhat fettering his existence, and his new spring coat was quite lost sight of for the feathers. Then he suddenly put both of his legs through the screen door and the next instant the whole procession arrived in the hall with a crash that sounded like the collapse of an early presidential boom.

"My darling Ellery!" sobbed Mrs. Wigglesworth, rushing forward.

"Screen doors put up!" shrieked Mr. Wigglesworth in a thick voice; "I'm Ellery Wigglesworth, the celebrated screen doorist. I'm Ellery W. Wigglesworth, the well-known philanthropist who goes around putting up screen doors for the poor. I'm ——"

But then they saw that his mind wandered and they unthreaded his legs from the wires with all the tenderness they were capable of.

Chapter II

How Wigglesworth Played an April Fool Joke

"'And the hired girl bothered us a good deal.'"—*Page 33.*

CHAPTER II.—*How Wigglesworth Played an April Fool Joke*

"HE! he! he!" snickered Mrs. Wigglesworth, as she bent over her work.

"What ye laughing at?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth, without looking up from his paper.

"I was thinking," answered his wife, shaking her head and smiling.

"Well, don't let it occur again!" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth. "How's anybody going to know what to look for when Mrs. Wigglesworth gets to thinking?"

"I was thinking about April Fool's Day," said Mrs Wigglesworth, unheeding her husband's pleasantry.

Mr. Wigglesworth stared over the top of his paper, and broke into a grin.

"That's natural enough, though," he said, with a loud chuckle, and then he nodded to himself in the glass.

"What a strange custom it is," Mrs. Wiggleworth continued, reflectively, "this playing of jokes upon people. I suppose it dates back ever so many years. Did you ever have any jokes played on you, Ellery?"

"Well, I guess I didn't," said Mr. Wigglesworth, blowing out his lips; "but I've played enough of 'em

on other people," he added, reminiscently. "Me and the Dodley twins used to be the greatest fellers for April fooling you ever saw, when we were boys."

"What did you do?" asked Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Do?" echoed her husband; "why — everything; what ye s'pose? Used to fool people, of course. Aleck Dodley used to get up the greatest tricks you ever heard of. But they could n't none of 'em get anything onto Aleck and me," concluded Mr. Wigglesworth; "we was too smart for 'em."

"I 'm sure you were," said his wife, knotting her thread.

"I don't suppose," said Mr. Wigglesworth, "that I 've had a joke played on me since I was ten years old."

"I don't believe anybody could fool me either," said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Huh!" said her husband, as he turned to his paper, and then in a flash, as such things always come, was born within him a mighty suggestion. Mr. Wigglesworth retired still further into the paper, to hide the grin which this suggestion engendered.

By and by Mrs. Wigglesworth laid down her work and vanished into the kitchen with some instructions for Imogene connected with bread mixing. Mr. Wigglesworth hastily blew out the lights, knowing from her custom that his wife would go up to bed by way of the kitchen stairs. Then he dashed noiselessly up the front way.

"Can't fool you, eh?" he chuckled, as he stole to the top of the back stairs.

Here he quickly arranged, through the medium of a chair, a pitcher of water and an ingeniously adjusted bit of cord, such a practical joke as the Dodley twins themselves, in their most twinly moments, might have looked upon with envy.

Mr. Wigglesworth's face purpled with suppressed laughter.

"Oh, no, we can't fool you!" he giggled, slapping his leg. Then he removed the light, and the ambushed water pitcher felt a shudder creep through its handle, as the horror of the situation was made evident.

"Emma!" bawled Mr. Wigglesworth down the stairs; "ain't ye coming to bed?" Then he winked to himself in the darkness.

"Oh, are you up there, Ellery?" answered his wife, putting her head in at the gloomy stairway; "I've been looking for you everywhere. Run to the front door, quick! Somebody's been ringing the bell for five minutes, and I can't go because my hands are all flour."

It was Mr. Wetherbee, who had come over to borrow Mr. Wigglesworth's gun.

"Going to try the rabbits in the morning," he said.

"Come right in!" said Mr. Wigglesworth, dragging at his neighbor cordially.

Mr. Wetherbee being an endorser on his note, Mr. Wigglesworth was anxious to show him every consideration. He soon had the lamps alight likewise a couple of cigars, and for half an hour conversation flowed merrily.

"I'll get the gun for you," then remarked Mr. Wigglesworth.

It was n't in the back hall, where he distinctly remembered leaving it, nor could he find it in the shed, where he knew it ought to be, and where he next sought for it, muttering.

"What ye done with that gun?" he called querluously, to his wife; "why can't ye leave things where I put 'em? Where ye hid it?"

"It's on the attic stairs," Mrs. Wigglesworth replied, her hands in the bread; "you left it there last week, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know," snapped Mr. Wigglesworth, dashing for the back stairs; "I know I left it in the shed. That's what I know," and he vanished up the stairway.

The unthinking person, who is not in the habit of thinking for himself, will be likely to affirm with undue haste that here is a situation invented by the novelist, and yet may we not, with our hands upon our respective hearts, candidly acknowledge that it was the most natural thing in the world, in the confusion consequent upon the advent of Mr. Wetherbee, and the exasperating search for the gun, for Mr. Wigglesworth to slip some of the cogs that operated his organ of recollection?

And meantime, while we are doing this, Mr. Wigglesworth is rushing up those stairs in the dark.

Zip!

That was the cord, tied ingeniously across the stairway.

Crash!

That was Mr. Wigglesworth, as his head dashed through the rounds of the chair.

Bang!

That was the general round-up, as the water pitcher turned its contents down Mr. Wigglesworth's neck and the whole procession, debouching in fine order, took up its line of march for the kitchen.

"I didn't know him at first," said Mr. Wetherbee, in explaining it afterward to his wife. "It was the most terrific noise you ever heard. I got there in two seconds, but Wigglesworth beat me, with hours to spare. By that time he had got his head clean through the chair, the rope had tied him from head to foot as he rolled down, and he'd stuck one leg so far into the pitcher that we had to break it to get it off."

"Break the—" interrupted his wife anxiously.

"The pitcher," replied Mr. Wetherbee. "And the hired girl bothered us a good deal."

"What did she do?" wondered Mrs. Wetherbee.

"That's it," explained her husband; "you see, she couldn't do anything, having fainted very early, and buried her face so deep in the pan of batter that I thought at first she never again would break a royal Worcester saucer."

"But what was it all about?" inquired Mrs. Wetherbee.

Mr. Wetherbee carefully unbuttoned his collar and laid it on the bureau.

"Wigglesworth," he said slowly, "was making an April fool of — of — his wife"

Chapter III

How Wigglesworth Beat the Carpet

"While his wife * * * fell forward with redoubled vig
and was enabled to smite her husband six or seven times in ra
succession."— *Page 44.*

CHAPTER III.—*How Wigglesworth Beat the Carpet*

"WELL, what's the matter now?" Mr. Wigglesworth wanted to know in his strong tone of masculine sympathy, as he sat down to the dinner table.

"Matter enough," his wife replied, her forehead wrinkled with care; "here I've been waiting and waiting all the forenoon for the man to come and take up the parlor carpet and clean it. He promised faithfully he'd do it, and I've got the parlor all torn up, but no man."

"That's right," Mr. Wigglesworth commented, as he looked across at his wife, "put three lumps of sugar in my coffee—that'll even things up in great shape. Never saw anybody like you for striking an average. Think I'm a monthly balance sheet, don't ye?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth apologized. "But you've no idea how annoying it is," she said, her voice quavering.

"Pooh!" returned her husband; "I never saw such a thing as a woman is to let little matters upset her. Where is this carpet?" he cried grandly; "let me get at it, if you want to see the fur fly!"

Mrs. Wigglesworth with considerable trepidation followed him into the parlor. A woman rightly distrusts her husband under such circumstances.

"Be careful!" she fluttered, as Mr. Wigglesworth backed up against a group of statuary and set it rocking.

"Why, cert!" Mr. Wigglesworth jocularly responded; "that's the way — that's the way to clean a carpet — man ought to put on woolen gloves and not get too near for fear of touching it! Come out of that!" he continued smartly, seizing a loose corner and ripping out a whole course of tacks; "better send out and get another man! What's the matter with waiting till spring planting is over? Why not advertise for the unemployed at highest wages?"

The delivery of these sentences, in Mr. Wigglesworth's choicest vein, was accompanied with such a ripping out of tacks, as the street never before had witnessed. True, little pieces of the carpet also ripped out here and there and mingled with Mrs. Wigglesworth's regrets, but in a period of time that was surprising for its brevity her husband had scrambled the breadths of that carpeting into a heap at the middle of the floor, and she could see him through the dust mopping off his forehead.

"Don't s'pose you like the methods of Wigglesworth?" he called; "'druther pay a man three dollars, would n't ye?"

"But — but the hard work comes in — in the beating," Mrs. Wigglesworth explained. Imogene and I could get out the tacks; what I wanted the man for was to beat out the dust."

"Two dollars more — that's what that means," re-

torted her husband. "I'll show ye how to save money instead of spending it like water," he added, whereupon he grabbed the carpet and dragged it out to the lawn, trailing it through two other rooms, to the detriment of several articles of bric-a-brac.

"Where ye going to hang the thing?" he said, after vainly peering up into the heavens and off across the country; "think I'm going to hold it up with one hand and slap it with the other?"

"There's a piece of rope in the cellar," Mrs. Wigglesworth volunteered, and her husband, muttering, went and got it. One end he tied to a tree and the other with much difficulty and standing on a barrel he made fast to a water-spout at the side of the house.

"There!" he triumphantly cried, as he stepped down from the barrel, "how's that for three dollars a day?"

"How are you going to get the carpet over it?" his wife ventured.

Mr. Wigglesworth turned an eye up at the rope, which was eight feet above sea-level.

"Why didn't ye tell me I was putting the thing up too high?" he snapped; "what's the use to be a fool in your own front yard?"

Mr. Wigglesworth noticed that the neighbors in three adjacent houses were looking out of window at him, and he had to keep his voice down on that account. Probably nothing in the world makes a man so unhappy as to have to curb his voice when his

emotions are all tending in the opposite direction, and Mr. Wigglesworth showed that he felt that way as he laboriously remounted the barrel and lowered the rope. Then with infinite pains he dragged the carpet over it — it was a stiff, unyielding carpet with huge red roses blowing luxuriantly upon a purple ground— and he was not in the least mollified at discovering that, this done, half of the carpet yet trailed upon the soggy lawn.

"What ye grinning at?" he said in a voice that hissed through his clenched teeth.

"I — I was n't grinning!" stammered Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Yes ye was too!" he snarled. "You think it smart to stand there sucking in your lips and looking knowing, with all these freckle-faced neighbors gawking out at us, but I 'll show ye that the whole kit and boodle of ye can 't put me down! Why don't ye go fetch that clothes-pole?" he shouted, his voice slipping away from him; "think I can stay away from the office all day just to save money for you? Why don't ye prance round and do something if you expect me to help you out!"

So Mrs. Wigglesworth got the clothes pole and her husband braced it under one end of the line, which promptly sent the carpet slipping to the other end.

"Don't talk like that!" pleaded Mrs. Wigglesworth as her husband grabbed the carpet and snatched it back; "suppose the minister should be going by!"

"Where 's that hired girl!" called Mr. Wiggles-

worth, not heeding his wife's injunction; "what ye done with that female consolidation of household errors? Why ain't she out here doing some good instead of staying there in the kitchen putting her thumb through valuable dishes?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth brought forth Imogene, wiping her hands on the under side of her apron.

"Here you!" Mr. Wigglesworth said in an authoritative tone, "take this rake and pry up this end of the rope with it. Not that way!" he shouted as Imogene with great earnestness seized the rake and gave it a mighty hoist; "you don't have to hitch it over the corner of Jupiter. Just hold it straight, that's all you've got to do."

Mr. Wigglesworth then grasped a bean-pole and smote the carpet a blow. The hired girl, being new to the business, found the rake suddenly knocked out of her hand, and the huge carpet slipping down upon her. Mr. Wigglesworth danced right up in the air.

"Where'd ye get this imported aggregation of imbecility?" he snorted, pulling the carpet off the girl, whom Mrs. Wigglesworth assisted to her feet; "can't she boost a simple wooden rake into the air without introducing her foreign numheadedness into the performance?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth said some encouraging things to the girl, who resumed the rake, while Mr. Wigglesworth, growling uninterruptedly, picked up his bean-pole.

"Shan't I help you?" his wife asked, desirous of showing her interest.

"Lots of help you'd be!" grumbled Mr. Wigglesworth, but he consented, and his wife fetched a stick from the shed.

"Don't hit it too hard," warned her husband, grinning, as he saw the stick; "don't strike it under the guard and mash in its ribs." Soothed in a measure by these humorous sallies Mr. Wigglesworth raised his pole and caught the red roses a number of resounding thwacks. The hired girl surged forward and back with the wobblings of the rake, but maintained her ground valiantly. Great clouds of dust writhed out of the carpet's folds and enveloped Mr. Wigglesworth.

"What ye doing that for?" he shouted, coughing and spluttering and stamping about the lawn; "what ye want to pound all that dirt into my face for?"

"I—I didn't do it," replied his wife; "I hadn't begun yet."

"Hadn't begun!" echoed Mr. Wigglesworth in his angriest tone, as he wiped his eyes; "why hadn't ye? What ye standing round here for, making me do all the work? Ain't you just as well able to hit this carpet as I am? Now lay on, and strike for all you're worth, and see'f you can't do something."

Animated by this heroic injunction Mrs. Wigglesworth accompanied her husband into the conflict. The carpet was between them, and as Mr. Wigglesworth laid on with his bean-pole, Mrs. Wigglesworth,

shutting both eyes, waltzed in. The neighbors, who by this time had got their windows open and were leaning out, said afterwards that they never believed it possible one frail woman could in so short a time discover such a marvelous facility for hitting at things that were n't there, and one of them, a maiden lady in glasses, in rehearsing the scene at the sewing circle, said that even Mr. Wigglesworth's remarks were quite lost sight of in the wonderment that his wife's abnormal gestures awakened.

The first clip that Mrs. Wigglesworth struck fell a little short of the carpet, and so swung her twice around, causing her brain to reel with dizziness, but stimulated by the cries of Mr. Wigglesworth, on the opposite side of the carpet, she again uplifted her weapon, and keeping her eyes steadfastly shut, waded forward. How, being lost in her bearings, she first charged up against the clothes-pole and fetched it loose, is not yet clearly understood, but turning she made her way back, brandishing her stick with superhuman energy and cleaving the empty air with tremendous blows. Mr. Wigglesworth, unconscious of his wife's flank movement, was pounding industriously away, spitting out dust and quotations at every stroke, and the first intimation he received that death was loose and riding in his direction was a swinging clap of his wife's weapon that met him at the back of the neck, doubling him into the carpet with incredible swiftness and temporarily unhinging his reason. His unexpected weight projected upon the carpet utterly

bore down the tottering Imogene, whose rake, clawing along the line, buried its teeth out of sight in the scant hair of Mr. Wigglesworth; while his wife, feeling for the first time an opposition to her blows, and conceiving it to be the work cut out for her, fell forward with redoubled vigor and was able to smite her husband six or seven times in rapid succession before that gentleman's well-known voice and style of diction enabled her to open her eyes and discover whither she was drifting.

"Don't talk to me!" shrieked Mr. Wigglesworth as he struggled up and drove his bean-pole, point first, through the heart of the largest rose; "stay up there on that banking doing up your back hair and looking like an idiot for these neighbors to stare at — serves you right — and serves me right, too!" he yelled, smearing the blood from his nose with one hand; "serves me right for marrying into a family whose ancestors used to be court fools to the English kings and have kept up the blood for forty generations without a flaw!"

But the three-dollar man finished the carpet.

Chapter IV

How Mrs. Wigglesworth Gave a Surprise Party

"But it was some moments before Mr. Wetherbee and the minister could get the man with the red whiskers and Mr. Wigglesworth separated." — *Page 52.*

CHAPTER IV.—*How Mrs. Wigglesworth Gave a Surprise Party*

"AND you'll promise not to breathe a word of it?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth put her head insinuatingly on one side and held a finger archly toward the ceiling.

The minister's wife promised.

"Well, then," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, with an air, "I'm getting up a surprise party for Ellery. Tomorrow is his birthday, you know, and I just thought it would be the most fun to invite in a houseful of friends and give him the greatest surprise he ever had in his life."

The minister's wife said she thought it would be cute, and undertook for herself and husband to be present.

"Now, hush!" warned Mrs. Wigglesworth on going away; "not a word, for if it should get to Ellery it would ruin everything."

It is doubtful if any human being ever went about under a heavier weight of importance than Mrs. Wigglesworth exhibited all through the day. The air of mystery that throned her countenance, the warning looks cast upon Willie, the guilty startings when Mr. Wigglesworth uttered the most innocent remarks, were enough to have given warning to the

dullest perception that something special was impending.

"What ails ye, anyway?" grumbled Mr. Wigglesworth, staring across the table at his wife; "what ye trying to act out with all them fool faces? Think you're a graven image operated by clockwork, don't ye?"

"I was only — only thinking," faltered Mrs. Wigglesworth, lamely.

"Huh!" commented her husband; "can't ye think without working your face? People who are used to thinking do it on the inside of their heads. Why don't ye try it that way?"

"I was thinking," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, with great innocence, "that I'd ask you to go down street after supper and get me two dozen — er — eggs."

"What for?" grumbled Mr. Wigglesworth, spearing another biscuit; "what ye want with eggs all of a sudden that ye can't order 'em of the market boy in the morning?"

"Why, you see," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, plaiting the tablecloth, "I'm all out — and — and I really need a few for — for breakfast, you know," she concluded, with a frozen smile. She'd no idea it was such a difficult matter to get a man down street after supper.

Mr. Wigglesworth munched on in silence, while his wife's heart sank lower and lower. After all, she thought, with a sickening sensation, were her plans to utterly miscarry?

"Do go, Ellery," she said coaxingly.

Never in the world would Mr. Wigglesworth have done it on her solicitation, but, discovering that his box of cigars was burned out, he concluded that a little run down town would do him good. It was a close call. Ten minutes later the first guests arrived.

"Hush!" whispered Mrs. Wigglesworth, as she ushered them into the darkened hall. "Oh, such a time as I have had to get rid of Ellery! Put your things right in the dining-room, so he won't notice them when he comes back."

"I trust Brother Wigglesworth has no premonition of the charming event which you have — er — concocted?" said the minister, as he stepped through a hat belonging to a deacon of another denomination. "Dear me!" he exclaimed, "I fear I have deeply injured somebody's head covering. It was quite an accident, I assure you."

"Why don't ye look where ye're stepping?" returned the deacon, a little warmly.

"You should n't have deposited it upon the floor," protested the minister.

The difficulty in carrying on this altercation in a suppressed voice imparted a purple cast to the countenances of the speakers, which in the dim light of the subdued gas jets took on an awful expression.

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, looking in from the parlor, "you 'll have to come this way, please. And don't say another word, will you? for I expect Ellery at any moment."

Mrs. Wigglesworth's spirits rose to the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Wetherbee were there, also the woman who lived next door, and whose husband's long red whiskers presented a phosphorescent appearance in the ghostly gloom. Then there were Mr. and Mrs. Tacker, the Misses Sloot, young Mr. Tadley, Deacon Podder, Mr. and Mrs. Raggles and a number of others.

"Hush!" aspirated the minister. "I hear Brother Wigglesworth approaching the gate. Let us turn out the lights entirely, and when he advances into the middle of the apartment, suddenly re-ignite the gas and unitedly jump around him with merry shouts, wishing him many happy returns of the occasion."

In the stillness that ensued the noise of a fumbled lock was heard, also the swashing of the spring rain, which in the past half hour had grown from a mild drizzle to an April downpour, and through which Mr. Wigglesworth, burdened with the eggs and some other commissions, had found his way soakingly home, without an umbrella. How numb his fingers had grown! Would the lock never yield?

Then the door flung open with a crash and Mr. Wigglesworth slid three-quarters across the polished floor.

"Emma!" he called in a loud voice.

Naught answered to his cry. In the next room the guests cowered in corners, the man with the red whiskers nursing himself into an incipient apoplexy with suppression of breathing.

"Emma!" bawled Mr. Wigglesworth again, a little more angrily, "where ye got to now? What ye got the house so dark for, anyway? Think I'm a cathode ray, don't ye? Fetch out a light there."

There was no response to this, and the guests, bursting with repressed laughter, could hear Mr. Wigglesworth poking about the hall and muttering.

"Emma!" he yelled, as his head found one of the metal knobs of the hat tree, "where's my dry undershirt? I'm soaked to the skin, I tell ye, tramping around after your blamed old eggs. Hurry down here, can't ye?"

Now Mr. Wigglesworth had felt his way into the parlor.

"Oh, that's the way," he sneered aloud in a bitter tone, "that's all the thanks a man gets after soaking through the rain after a mess of gashflummuxed old addled eggs. Where's them matches?" he added, waving his arms around in the dark; "prob'ly she's hid them, also, after blowing out the lights. Emma!" he yelled again, and then listened. "Oh, no — no need to call her," he snorted, "prob'ly gone over to see that old hen next door and borrow some lard — either that or else pranced up to that chuckle-headed minister's to see about sending some more clothing to the missionaries, and me without a dry shirt to my back — wow!"

By this time Mr. Wigglesworth had worked over to the bay window, the egg basket still on his arm and his hands circling about in search of rescue, as a

man in the dark will, and the yell that he let off in the foregoing paragraph was occasioned by his hand closing around the red whiskers of the man who lived next door.

Mrs. Wigglesworth got the gas lighted as soon as her nervous haste would permit. But it was some time before Mr. Wetherbee and the minister could get the man with the red whiskers and Mr. Wigglesworth separated so that each might go on in his respective capacity.

"I 'm an old hen, am I?" spat the woman next door as she seized the red-whiskered man by the arm and dragged him toward the exit.

And really her husband had rolled over so many times with the basket of eggs, and was so covered with them from head to foot, resembling nothing so much as a movable Italian sunset, that even young Mr. Tadley could see how natural was the suggestion.

Chapter V

How Wigglesworth Hung the Wall Paper

"The paper letting go its hold and transferring its affections to the falling fortunes of the house of Wigglesworth."
—*Page 61.*

CHAPTER V.—*How Wigglesworth Hung the Wall Paper*

AT the first step Mr. Wigglesworth made into the front hall his foot rested upon a moist cake of soap, and in another instant he was over by the dining-room door with his arms around the hat-tree and some language trailing on behind that left a coppery taste in the atmosphere as it slowly curled up the front stairway.

"Who left that sloap on the foor?" he yelled, soon as he could unhook himself from the hat-tree.

"Why—I—I guess Imogene must," stammered Mrs. Wigglesworth, who had rushed in from the kitchen with a potato masher in her hand. "We—we are cleaning house, you know."

"Cleaning house!" repeated her husband, "well, s'pose ye are? You needn't think you're going to use me to flop up your moors with." The suddenness of Mr. Wigglesworth's entrance had temporarily unhinged his tongue. "Think you've seen me advertised in the back end of the magazine, don't ye?" he continued, "warranted to save labor or money refunded! Reckon I'm to be had of all grocers, I s'pose, or sent prepaid on receipt of price!"

These retorts were so keen that through their exercise Mr. Wigglesworth found his good nature coming back, and he ate dinner without grumbling

more than a husband has to do ordinarily. When he went into the sitting room he found the carpet up and there was a bundle of wall-paper in a chair.

"What's this?" he sniffed, suspiciously.

"It's wall paper," his wife responded; "I got it at a great bargain down to Root & Gilder's — closing out of new spring goods, just received, at less than cost."

"Huh!" grunted her husband, unrolling a package and holding it wrong side up. "Looks like a case of delirious trimmings."

"Yes," fluttered Mrs. Wigglesworth, "it is the new art, the man said — after Aubrey Beardsley."

"Who's Aubrey Beardsley?" coldly returned Mr. Wigglesworth with a falling inflection.

"He — he is — the — the man that has got up so many new ideas of — of art," Mrs. Wigglesworth explained; "they went quite crazy over him, you know, so the man said."

"Well, if they're any crazier than Beardsley I pity 'em," growled her husband, dropping the roll in disgust. "Who's going to hoist this nightmare onto our walls?" he added.

"I — I want you to step in and speak to the paper-hanger on your way down," his wife returned.

"Oh, yes, that's it!" Mr. Wigglesworth snorted, "feller with a blackboard on his shoulder and a hinge in the middle and four dollars a day ——" and then an idea shot into Mr. Wigglesworth's active brain. "B'george!" he cried, firing with it, "I'll hang this

paper myself!" and he began peeling off his coat.

"But, Ellery," his wife said in mild expostulation, "you have n't had any experience."

"Experience nothing!" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, "what 's experience got to do with a handy man? Four dollars a day 's experience enough for me, and I must be a chump if I can 't smear some moist flour over the rear end of a few sheets of paper and slap 'em up against a smooth wall!"

When Mr. Wigglesworth made up his mind to a thing, it was like the French Revolution, it had to go. In brief time Imogene was boiling some paste and Mrs. Wigglesworth had tied one of her aprons about her husband's neck, much to his disgust. Mrs. Wigglesworth declared when all nature was vocal with the melody of spring, when birds were fluting their first glad notes and a thousand streams made music in their journey toward the sea, she did n't propose to have her husband going through the street with flour paste daubed all over his new spring garments.

Mr. Wigglesworth opened one of the rolls of paper, spread it out on the dining-room table and "taking a sight" at the altitude of the room, cut off a strip that appeared to be the proper length. Utilizing a crumb-brush he spread on a copious quantity of paste and then lifted the paper by one end. He put his arms up to their full length but the other end of the paper still lingered on the table.

"Why don't ye take hold of it?" he said testily to his wife, who stood dubiously looking on.

So Mrs. Wigglesworth upraised the other end and her husband stood in a chair. He reached for the border line of the wall, but fell short of it.

"Why don't ye go fetch a table?" he roared. "That's right!" he shouted as Mrs. Wigglesworth dropped her end of the paper and the pasty side trailed over the back of the chair and clung about his knees.

"You told me to get the table," Mrs. Wigglesworth protested, considerably abashed.

"Oh, of course!" Mr. Wigglesworth retorted; "lay it all onto me. 'F I'd told ye to jump through a hoop I s'pose you'd done it! Well!" he yelled, as his arms began to draw out of their sockets, "what ye standing there all day on one foot for? Think my arms are bamboo fish poles with german silver joints, don't ye? Why don't ye go get the table, if you're going to, 'fore I stiffen out here like a blamed old mummy and have to go into a private collection under Exhibit A!"

Mrs. Wigglesworth got back as soon as possible, but not before her husband's arms had pulled out and he had dashed the paper on the floor and was stamping on it. Nothing relieves a man like stamping, so when they had arranged the table—a mahogany table with a shiny top—beside the wall, and put a little hassock on top of it, Mr. Wigglesworth felt sufficiently mollified to snip off another length of the Beardsley pattern and apply some more paste to its posterior surface, maintaining a steady current of growling at his wife, on general principles.

"Now don't be a fool, this time," he said, encouragingly, as they picked up the paper and he laboriously climbed to the polished surface of the table with it. Then he stepped cautiously upon the hassock and stood there an instant, his knees wobbling painfully.

"Can you reach?" his wife called from below. She was busy keeping her part of the paste away from the mahogany table.

"Reach?" echoed Mr. Wigglesworth, in a concentrated voice; "what ye s'pose I'm up here for anyway? Think I'm addressing the county convention? Want me to move an amendment in favor of woman's suffrage, don't ye?" Then the hassock turned slightly, as the worm is said to do, and in catching his breath and balance Mr. Wigglesworth jerked the paper out of his wife's tentative grasp. The paper turned a smart corner and flapped up against the wall, to which it clung in a clammy and tenacious embrace.

"What ye do that for?" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth as loud as the uncertain hassock would permit.

"I—I didn't go to," returned his frightened wife, and with what alacrity she was mistress of she unpeeled the cold and deathlike sheet.

"Now you let it alone, d'ye hear?" warned her husband, and acting upon his direction Mrs. Wigglesworth retired to the far side of the room, and looked on in fascination. This is the tragedy that swiftly unfolded itself.

Mr. Wigglesworth, feeling more and more the treacherous character of the hassock, held his knees at that angle which gives to even the strongest man an appearance of weakness. His arms were thrust out to their full capacity, and though at a distance, Mrs. Wigglesworth could feel the dreadful ache that pervaded them. First her husband pressed his end of the strip close up to the border; the lower end caught on also at the same instant, but in quite another part of the room, and by the time Mr. Wigglesworth had reached painfully downward and fetched it loose, at the same moment muttering something that Mrs. Wigglesworth tried hard to hear, but couldn't, distinctly, the upper end came away and flapped down over Mr. Wigglesworth's forehead, leaving more paste there than his wife had thought could be left on one forehead in a single afternoon. Mr. Wigglesworth's comments upon this transaction, as he frenziedly snatched at the paper, were not only clearly audible to his wife, but even penetrated to Imogene, who promptly opened the kitchen door to see if she might not be able to hear still plainer. Then Mr. Wigglesworth, with an earnestness that nobody could avoid noticing, spanked the moist side of that paper against the wall and slapped it with both hands till the creations of Aubrey Beardsley's fancy ran all into each other.

"Now fix the lower end," chirped Mrs. Wigglesworth from the distance.

This was one of those things that were better left

unsaid. Mr. Wigglesworth had stood on that uncertain hassock till his knees appeared permanently fixed at half-cock, his arms were stretched clean out of their legitimate precincts, his head was bursting with the upper stratum of hot air and perspiration fashioned his garments so close to him that he appeared to have been born that way. When this gratuitous direction burst cooingly from his wife's lips, he fetched a mad snatch at the end of the paper, and on the instant the hassock, with a low, fiendish chuckle, turned over on its other side. Mr. Wigglesworth had only time for one yell, and then vaulted into the air, the paper letting go its hold and transferred its affections to the falling fortunes of the house of Wigglesworth, and as that gentleman went sailing through the atmosphere, the paper wound itself in sinuous folds about him, till a stranger looking in at the window would have said that Mr. Wigglesworth was an admirable picture reproduced from a yellow poster.

"That's right," he yelled, soon as he could get to his feet and kick the hassock through the door, "stand over there with your thumb in your mouth and toeing in—that's all you're good for. Wh' d' ye let go that paper for?" he continued, shaking his fist toward the ceiling. "Why didn't ye steady the table, same's I told ye? You make me out the blamedest old fool in Knox county, always trying to help you with your economizing, but I want you to understand that the next time you get me to chore around at house-cleaning my name won't be Wiggles-

worth!" and he rushed up to the bath room to clean himself.

"I felt awfully about it," said Mrs. Wigglesworth to the minister's wife, who called soon afterwards to ask her to bake a cake for the church sociable, "but if you never saw a man fall off a mahogany table with a calico cooking apron tied round his neck you never can realize how dreadfully Ellery looked at that moment."

Chapter VI

How Wigglesworth Ran Through

"With a mighty up gathering of strength, Mr. Wigglesworth started forward." — *Page 71.*

CHAPTER VI.—*How Wigglesworth Ran Through*

WHEN Mr. Wigglesworth found that the man with the subscription book had detained him at the office till after his supper hour, which fact, however, he did not ascertain until the man had secured his name for the thirty parts of a publication nobody ever heard of, illustrated by views of places that never had been seen, he was mad, and he burst into the house with more than his usual vigor.

"Come, now!" he cried in a threatening tone as he jumped through the front hall, "s'pose ye mean to keep me waiting all night, don't ye? Hired girl wants another hour to boil them four-minute eggs, I s'pose? Tired to death, too, that's what I am, and you women folks loafing around here at home with nothing to do!"

But the supper table was immaculately spread and everything waited in readiness. Mrs. Wigglesworth called attention to this fact, with a little purring air of triumph. But that was n't the way to smooth Mr. Wigglesworth.

"Oh, yes!" he grumbled, jerking his napkin out of the ring, "you think it's mighty funny to contradict your own husband, and him tired and sick working for you. Awful knowing, you are. Been reading the Encyclopedia Britannica, ain't ye? Which volume

ye working through now? Must be prowling round in the index by this time. Take your arms off the table!" This concluding injunction was delivered to Master Willie Wigglesworth, which young man it brought bolt upright in his chair, with a suddenness that made his spinal column give forth a sharp metallic click.

"What 's all that rubbish across the street?" Mr. Wigglesworth growled out, after the meal had proceeded for some moments in silence, and with that gentleman's gaze fastened steadily upon his plate.

"It — it 's a — a bonfire," piped Willie, after swallowing a number of times to make way for his thin, scared voice.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Wigglesworth, with an awful glare; "there ain't no fire about it! Don't let me catch you telling any lies to your own father, young man!"

"He means," explained Mrs. Wigglesworth, "that it 's going to be a bonfire. After dark, you know. That 's what Willie meant to say."

"Oh, yes, you understand it," said Mr. Wigglesworth, smartly; "you 're the woman that goes round explaining things that never happened. Send you a lock of red hair by mail and you 'll tell anybody how to get over things that never ailed 'em. That 's what you 'll do. Pass the butter!"

Thus we see how wide-reaching is influence. Even the persistence of a book canvasser may operate to direct the tea table talk of celebrated individuals.

Book canvassers ought to think of this before it is too late.

But there was something in the hurry and excitement of the scene in the lot across the way that fired Mr. Wigglesworth's interest, as he stood after supper morosely gazing through the sitting-room window. Boys of all sizes and conditions were industriously rushing to and fro, staggering under piles of spruce boughs brought from neighboring flower gardens, and depositing them upon the huge mound reared in the center of the inclosure.

"B' george!" he said, rubbing one foot on top of the other, "that reminds me of the Dodley twins. What bonfires we did use to have! Why, me and Alexander Dodley — Aleck, we used to call him — What ye doing, you fool, you?" he shouted.

Mrs. Wigglesworth sprang half out of her chair.

"Wha — did you say?" she stammered, pulling the needle out of her thumb.

"Not you," her husband answered, testily, "the other one — that lunk-headed boy, out there — hi! you!" he called, rapping on the window, "don't start it that way!"

The boy had put a bit of paper in at the apex of the brush-heap, and was vainly striving to set it alight.

"Let me show 'em," muttered Mr. Wigglesworth, breaking for the door.

"Don't, Ellery, I beg of you," his wife pleaded; "you 're tired to death, and the ground's wet, and your slippers — "

But with a snarl, Mr. Wigglesworth was out in the yard and dashing across the street.

"Gimme that match," he bawled in a voice of authority as he pranced into the lot. "You boys don't know enough to eat pie! Wish't I had the Dodley twins here, we'd show ye how to run a bonfire that would make your eyes bug out!"

The boys gave back in awe of Mr. Wigglesworth's personality, and that gentleman, going down on his knees, tucked a crumpled newspaper under a corner of the brush and struck a match to it. There was a little flicker of light, a fortune of smoke, and Mr. Wigglesworth filled his lungs quite full of it.

"What you boys all standing around here for?" he yelled, coughing and stamping and batting his reddened eyes; "trying to keep the wind off, ain't ye?" Saying which he aimed a blow at the nearest boy, but missed him, and then he walked aimlessly around in a little circle, spluttering and heaving, with the smoke persistently wrapping him about.

"You started her on the wrong side!" shrieked the boy with two front teeth missing. This was true, but Mr. Wigglesworth never would have acknowledged it had not the little fire finally smouldered itself to death.

"Now you boys stand out of the way," he growled as he got down on his damp knees again; "I'd had it going long ago if't hadn't been for you."

Assisted by a little breeze the kindled paper flared up, caught the resinous boughs and leaped into life.

"Hooray!" screamed the boys, dancing madly up and down, their shadows making grotesque motions on the adjacent house walls.

"That's the stuff!" Mr. Wigglesworth said, standing back and looking like Nero when he had ordered Rome kindled, only more important. "Aleck Dodley always said I knew more about a bonfire than the whole town, and so did his brother. They were both twins and they knew what they were talking about, I tell ye!"

The blaze, setting the neighborhood alight, attracted great groups of spectators. Adjacent windows went up and filled with eager heads. Neighbors came forward with the refuse of house cleaning, and offered up old boots, and bottles, battered furniture and antique hoopskirts as tribute to the flames. Many years have gone by since hoopskirts made woman's life a burden, yet the attics of our homes continue to give forth from some mysterious corner their annual contributions of this antiquated finery.

During the momentary lull in the violence of the flames, while the smoke billowed forth in illuminated clouds, the boys began "running through." This game consisted of a short, quick run, ending in a flying leap straight over the burning pile. The onlookers saw the boy vault into the air and disappear amid the smoke, whence he almost instantly reappeared upon the opposite side, sans eyebrows, coughing and wiping his eyes and smelling horribly. There was a dash and excitement to the sport, particularly

when the smoke grew so dense and the interior flames so fierce that only the more adventuresome boys dared essay it. Then, as the flames spurted more fiercely aloft, even they were awed.

"Stump anybody to foller me!" screamed the boy with two front teeth missing, an awful look upon his black, smooched face. But the flames, fastening upon an old pair of pointed shoes, flung their naked arms aloft and roared in savage glee, appalling the stoutest-hearted. Mr. Wigglesworth shook his head.

"I wish the Dodley twins were here," he muttered, glowering at the boy with two front teeth missing. "Me and them used to jump through fires twice as big as this."

"You try it, pa!" screeched Willie Wigglesworth.

Mr. Wigglesworth shook his head again, but at this the crowd of spectators caught up the cry:

"Wigglesworth! Wigglesworth!" they shouted in chorus; "hoo-roar for Wigglesworth."

It was the noise of battle to the war horse when he snuffeth from afar off and remarks to himself, "Aha!" Mr. Wigglesworth's heart mounted, and for a second the blood swam before his eyes. Mrs. Wigglesworth could see from the window that something was impending.

"Don't you do it!" she screamed, throwing open the window and leaning far out. "Oh, Ellery, don't — don't, I beg of you!" she wailed, as that gentleman spat on his hands; "don't run through that fire with your new trousers on, and your others not yet mended, and me —"

It only required these expostulatory words of his wife.

"Stand back there!" he shouted, "and I'll show ye how to skate!"

With a mighty up-gathering of strength, Mr. Wigglesworth started forward. He ran heavily, for he was somewhat older than when he first set out in life, and the soggy ground yielded considerably to his slippers. Halfway up to the fire both slippers pulled off, but uplifted on the shouts of the populace, the valiant Wigglesworth pressed steadily forward. He realized, when too late, that he had taken too long a start, and his wind was leaving him, but with a superhuman effort he made a final dash, and just then one of the hoopskirts which had either writhed out of the fire or been cunningly laid in the path by the boy with two front teeth missing, threw itself about Mr. Wigglesworth's flying feet, and, uttering a merry cry, climbed rapidly up both his legs and remained there.

Under the broad glare of the footlights the spectators instantly discerned this transformation scene, and thought that Mr. Wigglesworth designed it as a special costumed act of ground and lofty tumbling, and their applause tore a ragged hole in the heavens. It is said by persons who have tried it, and failed, that when a man is drowning for the first time, thoughts that he never before has had brought to his attention flash upon his mind with incredible swiftness, and it was the same way with Mr. Wiggles-

worth. He felt the hoopskirt's shining coils about his tired legs, he felt its hot breath hissing in his ears, he saw the mocking flames ahead of him, and then with a mighty whoop he was projected into the air and went shrieking and plowing across the blazing crater of Vesuvius.

"Oh, is he dead—is he dead!" sobbed Mrs. Wigglesworth, as they led her husband across the street, the hoopskirt still clinging to him in spots and one side of his face entirely dewhiskered: "oh, Ellery, speak and tell me—"

"You get out of that window!" her husband screamed, waving his scorched arms in the air and his countenance distorted with streaks of soot: "what ye balancing up and down there for, with me perishing here in the street? I told ye you'd make a fool of yourself 'fore the day ended, and you've done it, getting me to act the monkey with your old brush fires! Open that door d'ye hear? 'fore I come up there and twitch ye through that window and knock some sense into that holler place other people keep their brains in!"

And the neighbors, who stood outside listening, said that it was more than an hour, before the sound of rumbling thunder died away inside the house.

Chapter VII

How Mrs. Wigglesworth Drove Some Neat Bargains

"The first zip of water caught the fat man in the neck."—
Page 80.

CHAPTER VII.—*How Mrs. Wigglesworth Drove Some Neat Bargains.*

"GO right away," warned Mrs. Wigglesworth in a falsetto voice. "I don't want them, and I won't have you tracking mud all over my clean steps!" And she slammed the door.

"There!" she said, triumphantly, coming back to the sitting-room, "I've got rid of him, I hope."

"Who's that?" Mr. Wigglesworth inquired over the top of his paper.

"One of those horrid old peddlers," his wife returned, "selling things out of a basket, and then when your back is turned snatching an overcoat off the rack and running away. But I sent him flying, you better believe!" she concluded, with an air of satisfaction.

"Humph!" growled Mr. Wigglesworth, rattling his paper, "I s'pose ye think that's smart?"

"Ellery Wigglesworth," his wife retorted, "do you want a tall man with whiskers to come right in here and sell me eight yards of Irish lace, and while I am gone upstairs for the money have him steal a pair of real Wedgewood vases off——"

"What's the use of acting paralyzed?" Mr. Wigglesworth broke in. "You women folks are all alike. Don't you s'pose these men who go around peddling have to work hard for a living? I never saw such

heartlessness," he continued, his voice mounting until it took on quite a declamatory flavor, that gave him a great sense of satisfaction. "These men are poor, maybe have large families to support, health gone, likely, and when they come to your doors, begging a little trade to save them from the poorhouse, you womenfolks set the dogs on 'em! I say its scandalous!"

By this time Mr. Wigglesworth had worked himself into a fine passion of eloquence, and he wished the kitchen door was open, so that Imogene might get the full effect of it.

"Why — I'm sure — " Mrs. Wigglesworth began.

"Oh, yes, you're sure," bullied her husband, "you're the surest one on the street, you are. Come in bottles, you do, one dollar each, or six for five, and warranted, or money refunded. By cutting a coupon out of your wrapper anybody can guess on the weight of the Washington Monument. That's what you are!" Mr. Wigglesworth thought he rarely had known himself to be in such a keen flow of argument and he hated to let up with it, but it was office time, and his wife had sunk upon the lounge, silenced and abashed by the flashing of his trenchant humor.

Two days later, it will be remembered, the thermometer suddenly rushed upstairs, and with a loud snort blew a vent-hole through its upper story. At the noon hour Mr. Wigglesworth plunged into the front hall, mopping his red face with a handkerchief.

"What ails ye?" he yelled, rushing into the parlor

and throwing up a window; "trying to make a vacuum, ain't ye, to take the place of that head of yours?"

"I beg of you, Ellery," pleaded his wife, "not to let all the dust in on this clean carpet."

"Carpet nothing!" puffed Mr. Wigglesworth, shoving up the other window; "s'pose I want to be fried to death in my own house? Hottest day in eight years, I tell ye, and me sasshaying round here in my winter flannels, just to oblige you!" Saying this, he shot up the front stairs.

"Where's my summer clothes?" he shouted, as he hurried out of the room.

Mrs. Wigglesworth said to the minister's wife afterward that at those words she felt herself to be glued to the lounge. There was a great noise overhead of trampling feet, doors slammed, chairs appeared to tip over with loud reports, and presently a dark purple streak of remarks peculiar to Mr. Wigglesworth began to find its way down the stairs and float out at the open window. People on their way to dinner stopped to listen, and a fat man in his shirt sleeves started up the steps as though to offer assistance.

"Ain't ye coming up here today?" bellowed Mr. Wigglesworth to his wife; "think I've got nothing to do but paw around in trunks with their lids off? Where's that gray suit?"

Weak and tottery as she was, Mrs. Wigglesworth had to mount the stairs, tightly clutching the bannister rail.

"Where 's that white vest of mine?" her husband called, as soon as she rose to the surface; "what 's got into ye, hiding my things this way? Don't tell me I didn't hang up a gray suit in this closet last Fall, 'cause I know better. Where 've ye stuffed that white vest?"

The rooms and closets of the second floor were burst open like a paper bag of flour dropped from the roof of a shot tower. Only those familiar with the grand energy of Mr. Wigglesworth's character can understand how in so short a time that gentleman could upset so many trunks and boxes and pull the knobs off thirteen bureau drawers.

"What 's the matter with ye?" he cried, glaring at his wife, who gazed on the ruins with a look of dismay. "Can 't ye answer a civil question? Got any fixed reason for not telling what's become of them flannel pants?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth gave a mighty swallow.

"I — sold them," she said in a faint voice.

"You what?" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, his face turning rigid.

"To a — peddler man, you know," his wife explained in a weak voice; "he came along, you know, after we had — had — talked it over — don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, I remember," Mr. Wigglesworth made reply, in a voice of unnatural calmness. "I recall it perfectly. Wha 'd ye get for them flannel pants?"

"A beautiful little statuette," Mrs. Wigglesworth answered; "of — of Psyche, I think."

"Ah, indeed!" her husband said, in an excess of affected pleasure. "And that elegant summer vest — for that you received — "

"The most exquisite matchsafe," Mrs. Wigglesworth replied with enthusiasm. "The man said himself it was worth twice as much as the vest."

"Oh, of course," Mr. Wigglesworth assented, "he knew. Anybody that 's a judge of matchsafes knows they 're out of sight 'longside any old vests belonging to Wigglesworth. And what about the gray suit? Let 's hear about the great commercial transaction of Mrs. Wigglesworth in gray suits. Tremendous bargains in gray suits at Mrs. Wigglesworth's. Gray suits marked down to make room for new spring goods. Call on Mrs. Wigglesworth before going elsewhere."

"Why — "—— Mrs. Wigglesworth began twining her fingers, "it — it was an old suit, you know — you 'd worn it two summers, Ellery."

"Yes — I know," her husband allowed, nodding his head confidentially at the bureau, as his wife hesitated.

"And so — you see," she went on, "it being old, and so worn, and the man saying the style had changed, you know — and all that — I — I threw it in."

Mr. Wigglesworth nodded again at the bureau. He nodded several times.

"She threw it in," he repeated to the bureau. "Mrs. Wigglesworth, my wife, threw it in."

Then he turned and walked out of the room. There was a fixed look of calmness on his countenance such as people wear just before they go crazy. Mr. Wigglesworth walked down the stairs. For fifteen minutes the fat man in shirt sleeves had stood at the front door, violently ringing the bell. Mr. Wigglesworth flung the door open.

"Beg pardon," the fat man said in a husky voice, "but hearing a loud noise inside, we thought there might be trouble, so I made bold to——"

Mr. Wigglesworth pushed past the fat man, caught up the lawn hose and turned on a full head. The first zip of water caught the fat man in the neck, just as he was boosting himself sidewise down the top step, and as he fetched a whoop and slid to the fence on his back, pawing the air madly, Mr. Wigglesworth was able to soak his clothes so full of water that it took four of the stoutest bystanders to hoist the fat man to his feet.

Chapter VIII

How Wigglesworth Took Off the Outside Window

"She dashed after the barrel and falling upon it with a hysterical cry rolled completely over it." — *Page 88.*

CHAPTER VIII.—*How Wigglesworth Took off the Outside Window*

"ELLERY," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, mildly, "do you realize that this is the last of June and we haven't got our storm windows off yet?"

"Well, why ain't we?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, sawing at his steak.

"I've spoken to you ever so many times about it, you know," pursued his wife, "and you always put me off."

"Huh! returned Mr. Wigglesworth, "you talk as if you were a suit of winter flannels."

"I wish they could be taken down," sighed his wife; "all the neighbors are laughing at us. Only yesterday Mrs. Todley asked me if we were going to use them this summer instead of screens."

"Ya-a-a-h-h!" sneered Mr. Wigglesworth, flinging down the napkin without folding it, as a man will when mad, "what ye s'pose I care about your meddling old neighbors? Todley better pay that $25 he owes me for last year's coal bill before his wife goes to putting on so many airs. I hate such people."

As his voice rose into a high tone of indignation Mr. Wigglesworth accompanied it out of the room.

"I don't see any outside windows," he called back

from the sitting room. "What ails ye, anyway? What ye fussing so about?"

"Why, that's just it," fluttered his wife, appearing in the door; "the inside ones are so dirty you can't see through them. That's why I want the outside ones down, so I can get cleaned up before Aunt Emmeline comes."

Mr. Wigglesworth received the reference to Aunt Emmeline with a sour countenance.

"Where's the screw driver?" he abruptly demanded.

Mrs. Wigglesworth laid a finger reflectively to her lip and put her head a trifle on one side.

"Let me see," she said, slowly, "the last time I saw it you were driving that nail in the — no, that wasn't it, of course," she hastily added, "for you had the hammer that time and knocked your thumbnail off — don't you remember, Ellery — when the minister and his wife came in at the very moment you were screaming those dreadful words just like the circus men use, Ellery — you remember."

Mr. Wigglesworth gave an impatient roll to his head.

"What ye talking about now?" he cried; "what ye running on like that for? Mrs. Wigglesworth the Human Phonograph. Drop a nickel and hear a piece spoke. Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight by special request."

"Oh, I know where it is!" cried that lady, clapping her hands; "Imogene had it last night shelling those lobsters. That's where it is."

It was a screw driver such as innocent neighbors are apt to borrow and bring back the next day with several of their knuckles missing. The rusty blade was blunted at the point and where it was let into the handle there was a brass band gone, so that the thing would unjoint when you least expected it and write its autograph on the back of your hand. Hired girls had been known to attack a tomato can with that screw driver and shortly afterwards come screaming into the front room with both wrists done up and a demand for their back wages.

Mr. Wigglesworth regarded it with intense disgust.

"Ain't that a daisy of a screw driver!" he ejaculated, as he flung it out of doors.

"Gimme a barrel here, can't ye?" he said, calling to his wife. "Can't ye help out a little instead of standing up on that verandah trying to look wise? How ye s'pose I'm going to unscrew these windows from the ground? Think I'm an extension fire ladder, don't ye? Wigglesworth, the world-renowned giraffe man. That's what you probably think."

Accelerated by this flowing tide of sarcasm Mrs. Wigglesworth hastened to fetch from the shed the last emptied flour barrel.

"It's awfully heavy, Ellery," she panted, for the sun shone blithely and there was very little air astir.

"Poh!" returned her husband, "don't find so much fault at having to do a little work. Can't anybody ask you to do the least bit of a job but you grumble and try to get out of it. Hold on

there, can't ye?" he yelled, as he essayed to climb onto the barrel and that important member of society began to buck ominously.

"What shall I do?" asked Mrs. Wigglesworth, anxiously.

"Do?" shouted her husband, who was crouched at the top of the barrel in a very unpoetic attitude, "do anything but stand there in the sun with your mouth open letting your teeth warp. What ye s'pose I want ye to do, jump through a hoop? Catch hold of the barrel and steady it, that's what you do, 'fore I fall over and mash my brains on the sidewalk."

The sun, after resting a few minutes behind a refreshing cloud, now came forward and attached Mr. Wigglesworth's garments permanently to that gentleman. Noting that it had caught Mr. Wigglesworth on the most favorable side of the house it laughed softly and bored him through with some of its most insinuating rays. Large, circular globules of perspiration appeared upon Mr. Wigglesworth's forehead, glittered there for an instant with the iridescence of the sun, and then fell to the ground with a low, sizzling sound.

Hereupon the woman next door put up her window and leaned far out of it, like Barbara Frietchie.

"What is Mr. Wigglesworth doing?" she called in her sweetest tone.

It was at the very moment that the screw driver, again slipping out of the rusty screw, had carried away the knuckle of Mr. Wigglesworth's thumb.

"Tell her none of her business!" he answered, thickly, with his thumb in his mouth.

"He's taking down the outside windows," Mrs. Wigglesworth cried back, raising her voice.

"I thought it was about time," commented the woman next door. "You seem to be having hard work. Shan't I come over and help you?"

"If she does I'll knock a hatchet into her," hoarsely muttered Mr. Wigglesworth with a malevolence that made his wife's flesh creep.

Mr. Wigglesworth toiled on, his blood mounting to a point that hospital doctors consider dangerous. "Ah! ha!" said the sun peering down on him, and stirring up its fires anew. "Oh ho!" it said, shaking its sides, "a merry fellow this, who leaves his outside windows on till after I have returned from my winter visit in Florida! Truly a mad wag he!" and it smote Mr. Wigglesworth in the back with some of the rays that Zuni Indians are said to cook meat with.

Mr. Wigglesworth's rage mounted with his blood.

"Gosh-flummux the blamed old rusty screws!" he would scream, pausing a moment to nurse his bleeding hands, while the shudders of Mrs. Wigglesworth shook the very barrel on which he stood, with knees bent at a painful angle, and from over the fence came wafting the still, small voice of the woman next door, fraught with advice, and at which Mr. Wigglesworth would give utterance to other things that he had not previously intended for publication.

But now the window hung by its last tottering

screw and Mr. Wigglesworth yanked at it viciously.

"What ails the gash-flummuxed old thing?" he shrieked as it still clung fondly to its winter home.

Mr. Wigglesworth confessed afterwards to the minister that he had forgotten the barrel, else he would n't have stamped upon it so savagely. Probably one hundred thousand men at different times in the world's history have stood up on barrels and had the head sink out from under them, but doubtless, none ever did it with more suddenness than Mr. Wigglesworth, or while balancing a fifty-pound outside window in the air.

Down the driveway the barrel rolled, and at every jolt there were nails that stuck still deeper into Mr. Wigglesworth.

"Take it off! Let me up!" he roared, lashing out wildly with his legs and arms, whereat the barrel rolled the faster and inserted its nails into Mr. Wigglesworth with deeper emphasis.

"Stop the barrel!" screamed the woman next door.

Then Mrs. Wigglesworth aroused from her state of paralysis. Uttering a shrill feminine scream, with out-stretched arms, she dashed after the barrel, and falling upon it with an hysterical cry rolled completely over it, while the barrel, giving vent to a loud note of triumph, passed relentlessly on and ground her prostrate figure into the soft mud of the driveway.

First the neighbors got Mrs. Wigglesworth on her feet and found both her sidecombs.

"Oh, where is my darling Ellery?" she wailed, wringing her hands.

They discovered him after a time, wandering aimlessly about behind the stable, hunting for a screwdriver and muttering incoherently. He still wore the barrel, and when a sympathizing carpenter offered to take it off, Mr. Wigglesworth burst into tears and refused to let anybody touch him.

They then saw how intense the rays of the sun had been.

Chapter IX

How Wigglesworth Rode Horseback

"At every third bound of the horse, a bound shorter and more skippy than the other two, the rider would go into the air." — *Page 97.*

CHAPTER IX — *How Wigglesworth Rode Horseback*

"THE minister's wife was here this afternoon," said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Humph," grunted Mr. Wigglesworth, "what kind of a show is she getting up now to help raise her husband's salary?"

"They're going on a little family picnic to Pine Hill tomorrow," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, hesitatingly, "and want us to go with them. I told them I would ask you, but I didn't think you'd care to go."

"That's it!" cried her husband, jabbing his knife savagely into a biscuit, "try to keep me out of all the fun you can. Keep Wigglesworth tied up in the office earning money so you can swell around in society, wearing clothes — that's the way. I hate such selfishness."

"She said," Mrs. Wigglesworth went on, "that I could ride in the carryall with them, and that they would borrow Mr. Bimley's horse for you to ride — if — if you thought you could," she added, doubtfully.

"Thought I could?" echoed Mr. Wigglesworth, scornfully. "Why not? Ain't I as well able to ride a horse as any of your family? It may be some time since I was on a saddle, but I don't have to have none of you nor your stiff-necked ministers to show me how."

The woman next door looking out of window the following morning, saw Mrs. Wigglesworth loading into the carriage, along with the minister and his wife, three baskets, four children and other concomitants of a family picnic.

"Rejoiced to see you, Brother Wigglesworth," exclaimed the minister, heartily, as Mr. Wigglesworth came down the walk. "Nature is unusually propitious for our little outing and our hearts should sing with gladness."

"That's so," Mr. Wigglesworth acknowledged. "Where's my horse?"

At that instant a boy appeared, towing a long, gaunt animal, once white in color, with a mere wisp of a mane and a tail of bobbish character. He was a horse who held up his head and regarded the world with suspicion.

"Whoa!" yelled Mr. Wigglesworth, as the horse tried to step on him. "What ye trying to do?" he said to the boy, threateningly. "Why don't ye hold on to that bridle, same's you're hired to? Whoa, hossy, whoa!" he said in a soothing tone. "Now, then, stand still and I'll get on."

But when Mr. Wigglesworth took hold of the saddle and raised a foot to the stirrup the gaunt horse gave a little jump to one side and breathed heavily.

"Whoa!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, as loudly as he cared to with the minister present. "Why don't ye hold the horse still?" he said savagely to the boy at the end of the bridle.

"How kin I hold her still?" retorted the boy, about whom the horse now went revolving, closely followed by Mr. Wigglesworth. "Git on her back an' she'll stand still."

"Don't ye give me none of your sarse," threatened Mr. Wigglesworth, glaring at the boy, "or I'll take and knock the head off'n you. Whoa — whoa, good hossy!"

Several times Mr. Wigglesworth got a toe in the stirrup, but the instant he essayed to lift himself, the horse would flaunt her little bud of a tail and waltz skittishly away, while Mr. Wigglesworth would come heavily to the ground and the boy at the end of the reins would feel his arms yank out of their sockets. When this performance had been repeated for the twentieth time they gave heed to the advice which Mrs. Wigglesworth had for several minutes earnestly been promulgating.

"Fetch Ellery one of the kitchen chairs," she called, and the minister, solicitous for the success of the picnic dinner, went and got it.

"Now," he suggested, "perhaps I can assist you, Brother Wigglesworth. If you will stand in the chair, the boy and I will push the horse up to you, and, doubtless, you can then mount with celerity."

It wasn't a very horsemanlike proceeding, but the forenoon was wasting and Mr. Wigglesworth, with a hot, red face, angrily agreed to it.

"I'll take it out of him when I get him on the road," he muttered with an awful air of revenge, as he stood up in the chair.

It was a successful manœuvre. Flanking the gaunt steed the minister pushed him gently toward the waiting Wigglesworth, who slipped a leg over the saddle before the astonished animal realized the confidence game that was being played upon him. Just at that instant Mrs. Wigglesworth had climbed out of the carriage in an earnest desire to lend assistance. Flinging his head aroûnd with a little gust of disappointment, the horse saw her close upon him, waving her parasol, and with a loud snort he waltzed across to the opposite sidewalk, Mr. Wigglesworth clutching wildly at the scanty mane and poking his feet madly about in vain search of the stirrups.

"What ye doing?" he yelled, as the horse fluttered nervously against the fence; "what kind of a fool you trying to act out this time?"

"I didn't mean to do anything," answered Mrs. Wigglesworth, abashed and frightened; "I was only going to help, and the horse saw me and—and jumped."

"Well, what ye expect?" cried Mr. Wigglesworth, angrily. "What ye s'pose he'd do when he saw you? Wonder he hadn't dashed my lungs out on a telephone pole—get out!—keep away, can't ye?" he yelled, as his wife came nearer, uttering some coaxing phrases, and putting out a hand to soothe the agitated beast.

"Whoa, good little hossy," she said in sugary tones.

"Get away!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, as the horse, unwon by these blandishments, ground his rider's leg against a fence post. "What ye doing with that blamed old red umbrella—put it up, can't ye?"

Rode Horseback

There are many inscrutable things in this life, and Mr. Wigglesworth always has maintained that his wife is one of them. When he shouted for her to put up the red sunshade that she was nervously fluttering in her hand, she put it up, only she did it the other way. As its circular form flamed forth with a crackling noise, the gaunt steed, already overwrought with the confusion and loud shouting, gathered his feet under him and bolted around the corner.

Summer visitors out for a morning stroll were surprised to see a long, bony horse flashing by, wearing a rider who, apparently, was unaccustomed to that style of locomotion. The rider's feet were thrust through the stirrups to their ankles and his trousers were worked up nearly to the knee. At every third bound of the horse, a bound shorter and more skippy than the other two, the rider would go into the air, so that persons of quick vision, standing behind, could look under him and catch a glimpse of the town clock. Then he would come down again, sometimes on the horse's neck and sometimes on the pommel of the saddle.

After this section of the parade had gone by, and quiet was settling down, the by-standers were again startled with an apparition of a large, old-fashioned carryall, filled with white-faced children, lunch baskets and three grown persons. A clerical-looking gentleman in spectacles, and without a hat, was urging forward the astonished-looking horse, spurring him on

with loud words of encouragement, and staring steadfastly ahead with a countenance upon which horror sat, while a fainty-looking woman clung on the rear seat and aimlessly branished a red umbrella.

Chapter X

How Wigglesworth Played Croquet

"At every blow, struck with terrific violence, a wire w'cket would go sailing through the air."—*Page 105.*

CHAPTER X. — *How Wigglesworth Played Croquet*

"TELL ye what it is," Mr. Wigglesworth puffed as he labored buttoning his vest, "I'm getting too stout. What I need's exercise."

"Why, I don't think you're any too stout," his wife returned through a mouthful of shell hairpins; "I think you look nice."

"Course," sniffed Mr. Wigglesworth, "that's the way a woman looks at it. Want me to swell up with apoplexy, don't ye, and have an effusion on the brain? Be fun, you think, to have a doctor come and let out two quarts of blood on the carpet, and then charge eighty dollars for showing me how to get it back again. That's the way Mrs. Wigglesworth economizes."

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Wigglesworth, toiling up the steps at noon and setting down a long flat box; "there's something that s got life in it."

"Why, Ellery, what is it?" said his wife, giving a little scream and backing away.

"Don't shy," grinned Mr. Wigglesworth; "t won't bite. It's a croquet set," he added triumphantly, throwing open the lid and disclosing the brightly painted balls and mallets.

"O-o-o-o-h-h!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, clapping her hands, "how nice! And will we play with it?"

"Play with it!" mimicked Mr. Wigglesworth; "wha'd ye think we'd do; hang it on the parlor wall? Might wear it to the Governor's reception, I s'pose. Or mebbe the hired girl would like to stuff a turkey with it — she's tried most everything else."

Finishing his dinner to the accompaniment of this style of comment, Mr. Wigglesworth went out on the lawn and adjusted the wire hoops according to diagram.

"Best exercise in the world," he boasted, waving a mallet in the air. "Old Wetherbee told me he reduced his weight nine pounds in two weeks. Come down here!" he called to his wife, "and let's have a game."

Mrs. Wigglesworth under her husband's direction, adjusted the ball.

"Do I knock it through this first wicket first?" she asked.

"Course," answered Mr. Wigglesworth; "think ye had to knock it through the last one first? Might try to get it through the seventh one fourth, I s'pose. Mrs. Wigglesworth's new rules for croquet, got up by herself."

Putting her tongue between her teeth Mrs. Wigglesworth struck smartly at the ball and dug a hole in the lawn. Quickly recovering, she dealt a second stroke, avoided the ball and tore the wicket out of the ground.

"That's the way," howled Mr. Wigglesworth. "That's the way to go through the wickets."

He plucked the bent wire from his wife's mallet and thrust it back in the ground.

"Lemme show ye," he said in a tone of importance, while Mrs. Wigglesworth stood back and adjusted her hair.

Mr. Wigglesworth sent his ball through the first wicket, and nearly got it through the second, and probably would have done so anyway if the minister hadn't leaned over the fence at that moment and disconcerted his aim.

"Delightful game," commented the minister in a kindly tone. "Full of life, requiring the exercise of skill and an admirable discipline for the temper. I am very fond of it."

Encouraged by this favorable opinion Mrs. Wigglesworth bunted her ball under the wire arch and struck the ball of her opponent.

"Bravo!" cried the minister, gleefully clapping his hands; "an exceedingly clever stroke. Now, you can croquet his ball out of your way."

The minister ostentatiously explained how this could be done, and under his instruction Mrs. Wigglesworth sent her husband's ball merrily bounding to the far extremity of the lawn, slowly followed by the husband himself. The minister was a finished performer and with his intelligent assistance Mrs. Wigglesworth discovered a skill that nobody could have believed her capable of. Smoothly she glided through the wickets, tapped pleasantly against the turning stake, and then set her sails for the return

home, while anon she would pounce upon her husband's opposing forces and rout them out of the county.

"You think yourself mighty smart, don't ye?" Mr. Wigglesworth growled between his gritted teeth to his wife, when the minister's back was turned.

Mrs. Wigglesworth suffered a little smile of triumph to momentarily flicker into her face, and at that the blood of Wigglesworth boiled over.

"Who's playing this game, anyway?" he snorted, glaring at the minister.

"Why, Ellery!" expostulated Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"I can beat the whole box and dice of ye!" ejaculated her husband angrily, as, with a lucky stroke, the balls collided. The full knowledge of the indignities heaped upon him in the game surged through his recollection, and he trod the balls into close conjunction.

"Look out, there!" he warned, waving the minister to one side.

Then he put his foot on the ball, lifted his mallet aloft and smote with a strength born of long-bottled-up anger. The mallet shrieked through its circle, there was a momentary agitation of the atmosphere, and Mr. Wigglesworth was rolling among the wickets with his foot in both hands and a connected stream of yells issuing from his lips, such as the minister said afterward he could never have believed the human lungs were equal to producing.

"Wow — wow — wow!" howled Mr. Wigglesworth,

curling about the home stake and thrusting one leg up towards the heavens while he still gripped the other foot affectionately.

"Let me help you," suggested the minister, leaning over him with a look of sympathy in his countenance.

Mr. Wigglesworth straightened out like a cracked spring.

"You get out of this yard!" he yelled; "don't you think because I go to your church and drop an envelope in the contribution box that you can come around here putting on airs and trying to make my wife think she's the head of the family! I want you to understand that I can run this ranch without any—"

With a face frozen in horror the minister already had dashed up the street, and Mr. Wigglesworth turned the battery on his wife. But that lady had discreetly vanished.

The woman next door saw a man prancing wildly about the lawn, waving above his head a painted mallet. At every blow, struck with terrific violence, a wire wicket would go sailing through the air and rattle the stable roof far distant. The man limped dreadfully, the woman next door declared, and accompanied each limp with a groan and some remarks that were more than adequate to the occasion. So there can be no doubt that it was Mr. Wigglesworth.

Chapter XI

How Wigglesworth Celebrated the Fourth

"'Me and the Dodley twins used to stay out all night firing guns and making more noise than a horse could haul.'"—
Page 110.

CHAPTER XI.—*How Wigglesworth Celebated the Fourth.*

BOOM! said the cannon.

Jangle — rangle — crash! went the church bells crazily.

Fitz — crackle — b-r-r-r-r — bang! that was the small boy with the giant cracker.

Mr. Wigglesworth lifted an inflamed face from the pillow and glared about the apartment. The hair that by day he wore carefully brushed up over his bald place hung in a limp and dish-rag condition.

"Oh, dear!" wailed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I haven't slept a wink since twelve o'clock."

Mr. Wigglesworth dashed his fists savagely into the pillow.

"If I had them boys here," he cried in a hoarse scream, "I'd take and knock their heads off!"

Everybody feels that way during the pale morning hours of Independence Day, but with the arrival of breakfast and the momentary cessation of hostilities softer sentiments are apt to prevail. Even Mr. Wigglesworth felt the asperity of his nature softening as Imogene brought in the eggs.

"After all, boys have to be boys," he allowed, wiping the egg from his cuff.

"I don't see why," complained Mrs. Wigglesworth, "and my head aching fit to split."

"Poh!" returned her husband, "what's the use to

complain of a little thing like that? Ain't ye willing the boys should have some fun once a year without your getting out a headache and trying to break it all up? What ye want to be so selfish for?"

"They did n't act that way when I was young," sighed Mrs. Wigglesworth. Mr. Wigglesworth looked at his wife sternly.

"When you was young?" he repeated with great sarcasm; "pro 'bly not. Impossible to recall what were the manners and customs when Mrs. Wigglesworth was young. Boys went to Sunday School picnics, pro'bly, and drank lemonade out of tin dippers. But that wa'n't the way with me," Mr. Wigglesworth boastfully added; "me and the Dodley twins used to stay out all night, firing guns and making more noise than a horse could haul."

"It must have been dreadful," shuddered his wife.

"Dreadful nothing," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth; "it was fun. Aleck Dodley used to cut up the greatest pranks in the world and he had the loudest gun you ever heard."

"I 'm glad I don't have to hear it now," said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Y-a-a-h-h?" cried her husband, pushing away from the table, "I hate such selfishness. Where 'd this country be, I 'd like to know, if King George had had his way?"

With which unanswerable bit of logic Mr. Wigglesworth repaired to the hammock and enjoyed the luxury of a morning holiday cigar. Backward over

the years his thoughts went trailing, and he was a boy again, wandering the country lanes with the mighty Aleck Dodley, splitting the heavens with the loud discharges of their guns, and being brought home in the early morning hours with a large quantity of powder suddenly inserted into his countenance.

"Boys don't have such times, these days," muttered Mr. Wigglesworth to himself; "they're slow. Me and the Dodley twins were smarter than a whole trainload of 'em."

Pursuing this train of thought it was natural for Mr. Wigglesworth at length to be seized with a mighty suggestion.

"I'll do it!" he exclaimed, smiting his leg; "I'll show these people how to wind up a Fourth, if they don't know how to open it."

Shortly afterwards he rushed into the fireworks store and gave an order that caused the proprietor to rub his hands.

"Shall we send up a man this evening to operate them?" he asked.

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Wigglesworth a little tartly; "I reckon I can poke off a few fireworks without having to be shown how."

It was a surprisingly large box that the expressman later unloaded on the lawn. Mr. Wigglesworth walked around it admiringly with his hands in his pockets.

"Ellery Wigglesworth!" called his wife sternly from the parlor window, "you don't mean to tell me

that those are the fireworks you are going to have?"

Mr. Wigglesworth kept on whistling.

"If you've any friends that want to see the biggest exhibition in town," he said presently, "you better trot 'em around."

The blazing sun in due season sank down the west and night brought out the stars, also a large quantity of boys who roosted on the Wigglesworth fence and prepared for any emergency, while the verandah became a bower of lovely women in beautiful summer evening dress.

"Rejoiced to see you, Brother Wigglesworth," said the minister, arriving at that moment with his wife; "we received your invitation and hastened hither with much alacrity. It is eminently fitting," added the minister, surveying the scene and practicing a gesture for the following Sunday, "that we should in this manner testify to the bravery of our forefathers in — in throwing off England's — er — galling — er — er — galling" ——

"Yoke," suggested his wife.

"Precisely," said the minister, "yoke — the very word I was about to employ — certainly."

"We'll open the show," called Mr. Wigglesworth, striding out upon the lawn with a becoming air of importance, "with a sky rocket. She's going to rise more 'n a mile, so keep your eye on her."

He stood the rocket up and laid a match to it. Then another match. Then another.

"What ails these miserable matches?" snapped

Mr. Wigglesworth, as he scratched yet another, which also burned itself out in harmless contact with the rocket. Mr. Wigglesworth flung it to the ground.

"Ellery Wigglesworth!" cried his wife from the verandah, "you ought to be ashamed to say such things, with all these people here!"

Mr. Wigglesworth mashed the rocket with a kick.

"Now see if you will go up!" he said, grinding it into the lawn.

Then he picked another rocket from the box and made a second attempt.

"Ellery," called Mrs. Wigglesworth with a tone of wisdom, "Mr. Wetherbee says you're trying to light it at the wrong end."

Under the phosphorescence of the burning match the glaring countenance that Mr. Wigglesworth turned toward the verandah was positively awful.

"Whose fireworks are these, I'd like to know?" he growled savagely.

But when he put the next match to the rocket's under side it promptly spirted a stream of hot sparks on his trousers, and rising with a siren scream dashed itself with great violence against the neighboring house, painting a huge picture of misery on its pure white side.

"Don't you send any more of those fireworks over here!" screamed the woman next door, putting her head still farther out of the window. "You'll have to pay for this, and don't you think you won't!"

"Ellery," called Mrs. Wigglesworth, in the tone that women love to assume when correcting their husbands before company, "Mr Wetherbee says if you want him to he'll come down there and show you how."

Mr. Wigglesworth at that moment was doing something with a roman candle. He had been for some time holding a match to its reluctant fuse, and at last to encourage it had blown upon it vigorously, so that the fuse, in waking to sudden action, had singed off Mr. Wigglesworth's eyebrows and partially cooked the whole front of his face. Now he was hopping about the lawn in an eccentric way, trying to avoid the showering sparks, while the balls began to shoot out of the candle, the first one ploughing off the back hair of the woman next door, who thereupon fetched such a scream that the window fell down on her, pinning her there with her body out in the night, and the second one setting fire to the minister's wife, who had come out for the first time of the season in a white lawn dress with patriotic red and blue ribbons all over it, and who promptly threw her arms about her husband with a yell that nearly ruptured the ear-drums of that kind-hearted gentleman.

Then Mr. Wigglesworth's gyrations brought the showering candle into contact with the open box of fireworks and here the pen of the historian stumbles.

The whole neighborhood was instantly lit up with a blaze of glory, through which appeared the revolving form of Mr. Wigglesworth in the guise of a pyrotech-

nic Liberty enlightening the whole world. Huge sky rockets, that ordinarily would require some ingenuity to arouse into life, went off with instant precipitation, taking the skirts of Mr. Wigglesworth's coat with them. Roman candles of every conceivable color and price blew their contents into the air with drunken screams of mirth, while several miles of pin wheels, uncoiling themselves like the spring of a Waterbury watch, clustered in wreaths of fiery serpents about the proud exhibitor's form and furnished the minister with a realistic text on Sodom and Gomorrah.

"My darling Ellery!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth, tottering forward when the smoke of conflict had rolled away.

But the legs of his trousers were so chopped off to the knee, his hands were blistered so, an exploding mine had introduced such an amount of Greek fire into his face, and a playful giant cracker had carried away so large a quantity of his Prince Albert whiskers, that it is doubtful if even the Dodley twins could have recognized him.

Chapter XII

How Wigglesworth Went Sailing

"'O-o-h-h, Ellery,' she moaned." — *Page 123.*

CHAPTER XII.—*How Wigglesworth Went Sailing*

THE Presbyterian Sunday-school had settled on a water excursion for its annual Summer outing, and Willie Wigglesworth came home filled with it.

"Will I go?" said Mr. Wigglesworth grandly; "of course I 'll go. And I 'll show ye how to take a day off and enjoy yourself, too. If your mother wants to hang around the house here and be a mummy, she can; but I don't propose to dry up that way."

The day was bright and a royal breeze from the northwest filled the air with invigorating life and made the waves of the harbor to dance merrily. The steamboat Daniel Webster, gay in bunting, lay at the wharf while the children swarmed on board and fell over things that were apparently made for land people to fall over. The Wigglesworth party arrived just as the lines were casting off and the paddles entering upon their preliminary churning. Mrs. Wigglesworth had the basket in one hand and Willie in the other, and her face was very red with haste.

"Hold on there!" called Mr. Wigglesworth, in a voice of authority; "why don't ye wait till people are aboard?"

"Why don't you get round the same day?" called back the captain; "everybody else 's been aboard half an hour."

With much shouting and pulling, and some language on the part of the deck hands that didn't accord with the character of the picnic, but seemed in a measure justified, Mrs. Wigglesworth and Willie were hoisted over the rail and Mr. Wigglesworth followed, trailing his white duck trousers over a rope that appeared to have been newly tarred for that purpose.

"Rejoiced to see you here," said the minister, cordially shaking Mr. Wigglesworth's hand and getting some of the tar off it.

"Yes, I thought I'd come," responded that gentleman, gloomily contemplating his trousers.

"Delightful?" the minister said with enthusiasm. "We are a large party, and it gladdens my heart to behold the little folks in their fresh young life and exhuberance of spirits."

"That's so," assented Mr. Wigglesworth, somewhat mollified as the salt breeze began playing through his whiskers.

Gathering speed, the Daniel Webster clave the dancing waters, the flags flaunted bravely, a brass band on the upper deck crashed into the measures of "A Life on the Ocean Wave," and boys of remarkable smallness began to implore their mothers for cake. Mr. Wigglesworth, cocking his wide-brimmed straw hat rakishly to one side, started for a stroll about the deck.

"Don't leave me, Ellery," pleaded his wife, "I beg of you."

"What's the matter?" querulously replied Mr.

Wigglesworth; "think we're going to strike on the rocks and go down with all hands?—with tar on 'em," he added, glowering at his own.

"These boats are never safe," Mrs. Wigglesworth hinted.

"I guess this one is," retorted her husband; "they've got her tied with a rope. What ye 'fraid of, anyway? Think somebody's going to bore a hole in her and sink her so's to drown the whole of us and get our life insurance?"

"But—but suppose it should tip over?" suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth, clutching nervously at her husband's arm.

"Yah!" exclaimed Mr. Wigglesworth, shaking off her grasp, "what ye think it is, a lamp? Puts ye in mind of a centre table with a vase on it, prob'ly. Why can't ye act rational, now ye've got me out here? What's the use coming on an excursion if ye can't enter into the thing and enjoy yourself, same's I do."

"But I begin to feel sick, Ellery," expostulated his wife.

"That's it!" Mr. Wigglesworth cried; "that's the way to have a good time. Come out here for fun and then call for a doctor's certificate the first thing. Why didn't ye stay to home? What's the use breaking out into society that way and spoiling the whole thing?"

Under the soft side of an island, near the mouth of the harbor, the Daniel Webster lay to, while the

excursionists, with merry hearts, opened their baskets and had dinner. Men and women of high character, but low digestive faculties, flung themselves into a perfect abandon of hard-boiled eggs and pie, while the minister, a special favorite, had something from every basket. Children with jam on their fingers came and took hold of pure white dresses belonging to their maiden aunts and begged for more Washington pie, and got it. Young men in the first faint flush of early moustaches took their third and fourth cream tart, and smearing some of the cream over the moustaches, left it there, and thus established to the eyes of the world what they were striving to accomplish. Maidens, giddy with excitement, spilled uncounted glasses of lemonade into the laps of their lawn dresses and laughed aloud. Even Mr. Wigglesworth, under the excitement of the moment forgot his dyspepsia, and loaded himself to the muzzle.

Then the Daniel Webster turned prow for home. The local papers have explained how the wind had unexpectedly whipped around to the southeast and gone to prying up the lower waters, over whose crested and yeasty tops the Daniel Webster now went rockily careering, but none of their columns has been equal to adequately setting forth the scenes that the decks of the steamer speedily presented. Nor does the present historian consider himself equal to the emergency.

Mr. Wigglesworth, his hat blown overboard, and smears of jelly mingled with the tar on his white duck

trousers, staggered aft along the deck. Mrs. Wigglesworth saw him coming and tottered forward.

"O-o-h-h, Ellery!" she moaned, falling limply about his neck.

"Get out!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, his pale face twitching in passion; "what ye trying to act out now?"

"Oh, I feel so — so sick!" groaned his wife.

"Sick!" snorted Mr. Wigglesworth, struggling to get free, "what's that got to do with it? Wha'd ye s'pose when ye came out here? Didn't I tell ye how 'twould be? Ever know me to miss it? Le'go my neck!"

Saying this, he wrenched himself loose and his wife fell in a huddle on the deck, while the impetus shot Mr. Wigglesworth under a seat, where he curled up against a pile of life preservers, and stayed there, giving utterance to a variety of groans that nobody in the whole ship's company could equal, though everybody tried, and some of them claiming afterwards, out of a spirit of church loyalty, that the minister came quite near it.

"You're a nice hand," growled Mr. Wigglesworth as they were being drawn home in a hack, "to go round getting up picnics, aint ye?"

"I — I hadn't any idea it would be so rough," moaned his wife. "But I thought you were sick, too."

"Hoh!" sniffed Mr. Wigglesworth; "there was n't anything much the matter with me. 'F I had n't eaten that second piece of lemon pie I'd been as kinky as the best of 'em."

Chapter XIII

How Wigglesworth Mowed the Lawn

"'Get out of the way, then,' snapped Mr. Wigglesworth."
—*Page 129.*

CHAPTER XIII. — *How Wigglesworth Mowed the Lawn*

"ELLERY," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, with a little air of timidity.

"Umphhmmm?" grunted Mr. Wigglesworth, being engrossed in his paper, as a husband usually is.

"I wish you'd send up a man to mow the lawn," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, toying nervously with the leaves of her magazine.

"Oh, of course," replied her husband, deep in an article on the financial question, "send up a man — that's the way. That's Mrs. Wigglesworth the great political economist. How to support the unemployed out of your husband's pocket-book, by Mrs. E. Wigglesworth, the celebrated free silver agitatress, eight cents a copy or three copies for twenty-five cents."

"I know these things cost lots of money," returned Mrs. Wigglesworth, tapping her teeth with the paper cutter, "and I want to save every cent possible — of course I do. Can't you mow it, Ellery? You can borrow Mr. Wetherbee's lawn mower and ——"

"That's it, that's the way," broke in Mr. Wigglesworth, with a bitter laugh; that's Mrs. Wigglesworth's idea of economy," he added, nodding sarcastically to the lamp; "le's save on the two-dollar laborer, says Mrs. Wigglesworth, but never mind how much we pile onto the old man — oh, no, never mind

old Wigglesworth. Sock it to Wigglesworth all you can, that 's her idea. Never mind how sick and tired Wigglesworth gets, slaving at the office all day to support my extravagances, I 'll pile the stuff onto him when he gets home, says Mrs. Wigglesworth. That 's what she says. I despise such selfishness?" cried Mr. Wigglesworth, pausing to violently wipe off his heated countenance.

Mrs. Wigglesworth found herself too dizzy to combat the rotary character of her husband's eloquence, so she wisely refrained from saying anything. Sometimes a man's wife will do that way.

The grass on the lawn was certainly very high. Mr. Wigglesworth noticed this fact again as he started for the office next morning. No mortal man, he reflected, could push a lawn mower through such a sturdy growth.

"A scythe is what you need," muttered Mr. Wigglesworth, apostrophizing the grass.

Two hours later a large, fat lady fell over a box of shoes standing on the curbing, thereby permanently injuring several domestic eggs that she was carrying home in a paper sack, while a number of leading citizens removed nearly two gallons of fresh paint from an adjacent fence in their haste to get on top of it.

In another moment Mr. Wigglesworth, bearing a new scythe in his grasp, went skimming by.

He had bought the scythe at a store where they keep such things to sell. He told the man that he'd

probably mowed thousands of acres of grass when he was a boy. City men who were originally born on a farm often give way to that hallucination. So the store keeper had let him have the scythe, but when he saw Mr. Wigglesworth stop outside the door and essay to hang the two parts of the scythe together, the storekeeper turned pale and hastily telephoned the emergency hospital.

The scythe blade was a Turkish crescent sort of affair on an enlarged scale and it had a wooden handle that cockscrewed like the career of a successful politician.

"Get out of the way, then!" snapped Mr. Wigglesworth, as a long, yellow dog turned with a loud gesture and regarded the piece of bleeding tail that the scythe had deposited on the sidewalk.

Ten minutes after this Mr. Wigglesworth had the scythe entangled in his front gate and was yanking at it viciously.

"Gash-flummux the old thing!" he yelled, aiming a kick at the sinuous handle, "what ye think this is—a Chinese puzzle?" and then he tore out the bottom of a trouser's leg on it.

"Why, Ellery," cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, appearing on the front stoop, hastily rolling up her apron, "what have you got there?"

"Got there?" sneered Mr. Wigglesworth, grabbing up a piece of plank and knocking at the handle savagely, "what ye s'pose? Looks like an upright cook stove, don't it? Think it's a gavel made from

the birthplace of Roger Williams, don't ye?" and then the handle for no ostensible reason suddenly unthreading itself from the pickets, Mr. Wigglesworth shot half-way up the front walk with it, neatly mowing off half a dozen gladiolus (*G. psit tacinus*) before the career of the scythe could be arrested.

"Oh, dear, dear, dear!" moaned Mrs. Wigglesworth, wringing the apron, "look at my beautiful gladiolus."

"What ye s'pose I care," shouted her husband, giving the prostrate implement another kick; "if you hadn't gone and shut that gate in my face I wouldn't had such trouble getting in here."

"But what are you going to do with that scythe?" mildly inquired Mrs. Wigglesworth, after offering a tribute of tears to the gladiolus.

"Do with it?" retorted her husband, throwing off his coat with an air of importance, "mow the lawn with it, of course. What ye s'pose? Thought I was going to wash the windows with it didn't ye? Pro'bly reckoned I was going to bore an artesian well."

Mr. Wigglesworth took a comprehensive survey of the tall grass and lifting the scythe from the ground balanced it on his hands. There was something wrong about it, he couldn't say just where, but it twisted itself so drunkenly, and the blade stood off at such a doubtful angle, that Mr. Wigglesworth questioned in his own heart if his first sweep would take out a row of pickets or cut a long gash down the parlor window screen.

"Ah, Brother Wigglesworth," called the familiar voice of the minister, "mowing this morning?"

Mr. Wigglesworth regarded the good man with a frown.

"No," he replied, in a tone of sarcasm, "I'm sewing a button on my vest," and he looked again at his scythe.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed the minister, "very good, indeed. Positively, I must repeat that to my wife — sewing a button on your vest — ha-ha-ha — very good! But you ought to turn the blade around, Brother Wigglesworth. You will observe, by careful analysis, that you have it pointing in an opposite direction, utterly inconsistent with adequate ease of manipulation."

Mr. Wigglesworth, acting on this suggestion, rehung the blade on the handle, and assuming an attitude that he recalled from his boyhood, gave the scythe a jaunty swing and snipped off the top of his wife's favorite weigelia (*W. Variegata.*)

"You should point the blade a little lower," suggested the minister, who was leaning over the fence.

Mr. Wigglesworth brought back the scythe and gave a mighty stroke that buried the point into the ground and nearly poked out two of his floating ribs with the handle.

"Wow!" he yelled, dropping the scythe and taking his bruised ribs into an affectionate grasp; "oh, I've smashed my whole side in! I've splintered every rib in my body!"

After Mr. Wigglesworth had limped about the yard for some moments he felt his anger mounting.

"Gimme that scythe!" he said in a condensed voice, and there was a wild gleam in his eye that made the minister shudder, while Mrs. Wigglesworth, looking on from the parlor window, held her breath for several minutes without noticing it.

It is remarkable how many things a man used to know when a boy that have now slipped his recollection, or become sadly altered by the lapse of time. Mr. Wigglesworth, as he lunged into the grass, thought of this. A man can think of a vast number of things while a scythe, missing its aim, is engaged in swinging him twice around without halting. So instantaneous is thought.

"That 's it?" cried Mr. Wigglesworth, recovering his poise and aiming another blow at the atmosphere, "that 's the way to mow! That 's the way to make hay while the sun shines," he shouted, clawing the scythe loose from a flower-bed and raking a whole battalion of Sweet Williams (*Dianthus barbatus*) off at the ankles; "Wigglesworth, the patent mowing machine with gilt spokes in the wheels!" and he dug the point into a line fence and split an inch board with it; "fields mowed to order and satisfaction guaranteed or hay refunded!" he yelled, pulling the scythe out and neatly felling a young green ash tree (*F. juglandiflora*) that he had been nursing with great assiduity. "I'm the great North American hayist!" he shrieked, purple in the face; "baled hay

constantly on hand or sent postpaid on receipt of price!"—and then the scythe, mercifully catching itself on the limb of a rock maple (*A. saccharinum*) tore itself from his benumbed hands, and after dealing him a blow on the head with its handle that raised an entirely new kind of phrenological organ, passed out into the street and came near to decapitating a poor but freckled boy who was the only support of his widowed mother and eleven small children.

As the minister gently took him by the hand and led him toward the house, Mr. Wigglesworth shook his fist at his wife through the window.

"I'll have a divorce for this!" he shouted, laying a blistered hand to his poor, aching head.

But under the soothing influence of the minister softer sentiments prevailed, and instead he got an axe and chopped at the scythe till its own maker wouldn't have recognized it.

Chapter XIV

How Wigglesworth Rode a Bicycle

"'Hold her up there!' he cried."—*Page 139.*

CHAPTER XIV.—*How Wigglesworth Rode a Bicycle*

AT frequent intervals during supper Mr. Wigglesworth would stay the motion of his jaws, and incline a listening ear toward the back door. The look of mysterious importance that enveloped his countenance cast Mrs. Wigglesworth into a flutter of spirits, and when at last her husband broke for the door, she followed him, thinking with a little tremor of delight, that he had a surprise for her. And so he had.

The expressman was just going away, leaving a glistening bicycle, which Mr. Wigglesworth, his hands in his pockets, was walking around admiringly.

"O-o-h-h-h!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, clapping her hands, "is it for me?"

Mr. Wigglesworth threw upon her a look of hauteur.

"But who can it be for?" Mrs. Wigglesworth wondered, seeing that the card hadn't turned up to her.

"Why, who'd ye s'pose?" retorted her husband, rubbing his fingers over the shiny handles; "think I got it for the hired girl, don't ye? What's the matter with my giving it to the minister, so he can waltz up and down the aisle and take his own collections? Don't s'pose it could occur to ye that Wigglesworth wanted it for himself?"

"Why — I didn't" — Mrs. Wigglesworth stammered.

"Oh, of course not," her husband snorted; "I might go around all summer with my liver hanging over on one side, and you'd never mention it. Don't ye s'pose I like to have as many lungs as anybody? Think I'm going to have my whole system clog up and burst, like a dam?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth gave a scream.

"Ellery Wigglesworth," she said sternly, "you ought to be ashamed to use such language right here on your own back porch!"

A short time later the woman next door, going out to shake a tablecloth, saw such things coming to pass over in the Wigglesworth driveway as put all thoughts of tablecloths out of mind. It is to this neighborly lady that the ladies' afternoon whist conversazione became indebted for the clearest account of the performance that has yet been made public.

"What ails ye?" Mr. Wigglesworth was yelling to Imogene, "can't ye walk along here ten seconds without putting your foreign feet under the wheels? Who asked you to trig the thing?"

Mr. Wigglesworth, his coat off and his long hair disarranged from his bald top, sat on the little leather saddle, his hands deathlessly gripping the polished handles and his body bent forward at the most painful angle known to geometry. Mrs. Wigglesworth and Imogene, on either side of the machine, spent their strength in keeping it erect, while Mr. Wiggles-

worth felt around in the air with his feet for the pedals and then when he found one, pushed at it savagely, while his foot and his temper slipped off, the former tearing a hole in Imogene's apron and the latter in the shape of a remark curling and crisping the young leaves on the trees.

"Hold her up there!" he cried, as the world fetched a heavy list to starboard and Mrs. Wigglesworth tottered and was like to go down. "What's the matter," he puffed, making some more aimless circles with his left foot; "can't ye boost up one side of a simple thing like this?"

"It's — awfully heavy," gasped his wife, with her tongue between her teeth.

"Heavy!" bullied Mr. Wigglesworth, in as loud a voice as the machine would permit, "course it's heavy. That's what I've been telling ye all winter. Doctor says 'f I don't get exercise 'm liable to get fatty degeneration and — and degenerate. Don't do that!" he shouted, as the weight suddenly shifted to Imogene, buckling that red-faced young lady into a S; "ain't ye got sense enough to hold her even? Them sudden jerks is what snaps my neck so. What ye doing that for?" he yelled as Imogene, stimulated by his cries, straightened out of the letter S and imparted a wobbling motion to the procession that almost flung Mr. Wigglesworth over the fence; "think you're washing our best dishes, don't ye? Don't act so strong."

Then the celebration moved painfully onward, the

heavy topped machine pendululming from Mrs. Wigglesworth to Imogene and back again, while Mr. Wigglesworth put his eyes still further out of his head and scarred his shins on the eccentric pedals, and muttered things that were not clearly intelligible to the woman next door, the wind being unfavorable, though she listened carefully.

So came they at last to the place where the driveway makes a turn into the stable. Either you make the turn at the same time the driveway does, or you keep on down a little hill into the clothes-dryer.

"Turn the thing round?" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, catching a momentary glimpse of the situation; "steer her round, can't ye? Want to poke me into the ocean?"

"You — you ought to be doing the steering?" his wife answered, with the suggestion of a sob in her overworked system.

"So I am," screamed the wretched Wigglesworth, a fear of disaster clutching at his heart, "but the blamed old thing won't twist. Push — Why don't ye push!"

That's what they were doing, to their utmost, Mrs. Wigglesworth one way and Imogene the other, so that the machine, tossed in the storm that these conflicting passions aroused, raged back and forth and then passed off the graveled way and took a hasty course toward Europe. All the horrors of the situation loomed swiftly to the goggling eyes of Mr. Wigglesworth.

"Hold her — hold her back!" he shrieked, tearing

madly at the handles and waving his legs about in the atmosphere.

The women strove to do this, with their utmost, but that were small matter now that the machine, tearing itself from their grasp and kicking up its hind wheel in an excess of youthful spirits, realized what an opportunity was afforded it. Down the steep bank it charged, Mr. Wigglesworth still knit to its handles and looking, the woman next door said, like an allegory of something that in the confusion of the moment she could n't recall the name of, but which could be easily ascertained by referring to the rear end of the dictionary, and then, obeying at last, the wild plucking at its handles, swerving just enough to accompany its daring rider into the thickest ranks of the dryer full of clothes. There was a shrill scream from the women on the bank and a hoarse roar from the whirling Wigglesworth, and in another moment he had shot out on the opposite side, both wheels of the machine curled about his legs like a wire puzzle, and hanging from his neck a red and yellow calico gown that belonged to Imogene.

"That 's what comes of being a home-made fool!" Mr. Wigglesworth screamed as they untwisted his legs from the wire spokes; "that's what I get for trying to follow your idiotic advice to take some exercise. Who put this thing round my neck?" he yelled still louder, twitching at the calico gown; "git it off — git it off, d'ye hear? and give that hired girl notice! This is the third time she's tried to take my life, and I tell ye she's dangerous!"

Chapter XV

How Wigglesworth Caught the Burglar

"'See anything,' he whispered." — *Page 147.*

CHAPTER XV.—*How Wigglesworth Caught the Burglar*

"ELLERY!" hoarsely whispered Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Ellery!" she repeated, shaking him by the shoulder.

"Whatyewan?" muttered Mr. Wigglesworth in one word. Then he pushed his head further into the pillow and trilled a little snore.

"Ellery Wigglesworth!" exclaimed his wife, using a never-failing elbow, "do you want to lie there asleep and see us both murdered in our own house? I tell you I hear somebody down stairs!"

Mr. Wigglesworth came bolt upright in an instant.

"Sh!" he hissed loudly. "Don't ye know any better than to stick a sharp elbow into my back and make me yell? He might have heard me!"

"Who might?" Mrs. Wigglesworth wailed. "Oh, Ellery, you don't mean to tell me there's a burglar in the house?"

"I tell ye?" echoed Mr. Wigglesworth wrathfully; "didn't you wake me up and say there was? Don't ye go laying the blame on my shoulders."

There was something blood-chilling in this whispered conversation, carried on under cover of the darkness, with ears strained to catch some sound and every nerve wrought to highest tension. Then time, which for a season had seemed to stand still, resumed its onward flight.

"I guess it wasn't anything," Mrs. Wigglesworth concluded.

"Dry up, can't ye!" commanded her husband; "what's the use bellering round so till ye find out? Want to see me shot down defending my own house, don't ye?"

"Hark!" interrupted Mrs. Wigglesworth, straining her eyes into the blackness. "I know I heard something then. Oh, do get up, Ellery, and go see."

Mr. Wigglesworth blew a loud blast through his nostrils.

"What ye want?" he whispered savagely, glaring at his wife through the gloom; "think I'm going out there and have my lungs cut open with a knife? Reckon I'm Napoleon at the bridge of Arcola, don't ye?"

There could be no disguising the fact that somebody was moving stealthily about in the lower part of the house. The noises were muffled, with now and then a subdued clinking sound.

Mr. Wigglesworth got cautiously out of bed, made two faltering steps and put his feet on his wife's slippers. No married man ever got out of bed and took a step in the dark with any other result.

"There they are again!" he howled as loudly as he dared, kicking the slippers viciously.

"Don't let them stab you!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, hysterically, putting her head under the quilt.

But her husband's mutterings as he stumbled about the room brought her forth again.

"Do hurry up and light the lamp," she pleaded.

"That 's it," returned Mr. Wigglesworth. "You know the thing to do in an emergency. Want to illuminate, don't ye, so anybody can shoot through the keyhole and break the looking-glass."

In the closet was a heavy cane, which Mr. Wigglesworth succeeded in laying hold of. With that his spirits mounted a little.

"Why don't ye come out of that bed?" he directed; "think they 're after you?"

"Don't do anything rash, I beg of you, Ellery," said Mrs. Wigglesworth agitatedly, as she found a skirt and put it over her shoulders.

"You go ahead there and open the door," said Mr. Wigglesworth, "and if any of 'em show their heads I 'll take and knock a hole in 'em!"

"I — I don't dare!" Mrs. Wigglesworth whimpered.

"What 's the use to be a snivelling coward?" argued her husband. "Ain 't I here to protect ye?"

"You — you go ahead," suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"What kind of a way would that be?" blustered her husband. "S 'pose they 'd jab a hatchet into me first thing, what would become of you, I 'd like to know?"

Stimulated by these encouraging arguments, Mrs. Wigglesworth softly turned the knob and stole into the hall. Mr. Wigglesworth peered through the door and watched her dimly moving toward the stairway.

"See anything?" he whispered.

"There's a light in the pantry," returned his wife, her teeth chattering.

"Go down the stairs," advised Mr. Wigglesworth, partially closing the door.

It is a dreadful thing to be left alone in your room, the darkness intense, with creepy sensations going up your back, and only one poor cane between you and death — death at the desperate hand of a burglar. The weight of the situation pressed cruelly upon Mr. Wigglesworth. Would his wife never come back? He cautiously opened the door. Had she in a sudden accession of feminine courage gone down the stairs and been chloroformed — perhaps been ——?

Mr. Wigglesworth's heart turned over, and his hair made a sudden gesture as though it would stand on end. Slowly and fearfully he also stole down the stairs.

"I must know the worst," he muttered hoarsely, with an in-catching of his breath.

If he could make the back hall it would be possible to investigate the pantry, whence a light shone dimly, and also escape out of doors if need were. Silently Mr. Wigglesworth accomplished this feat, and then a figure came darkly through the other door and collided with him.

Night workmen going early home from their toil heard the yell that Mr. Wigglesworth let loose as he grappled with the figure, which likewise sent forth a companion shriek. There was for an instant a dreadful scuffle, then a crash, and Mr. Wigglesworth was

down on the floor, lashing out with the cane and bawling ceaselessly. Then Mrs. Wigglesworth ran in with a light.

"Wow!" screamed Mr. Wigglesworth; "where's he gone?"

"Where's who gone?" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"The burglar — there's half a dozen of 'em!" howled Mr. Wigglesworth. "I tackled 'em all single-handed. I'm wallowing in blood!"

"No you ain't!" earnestly protested his wife, holding the light nearer; "that's my new tomato pickle. You're covered with it!"

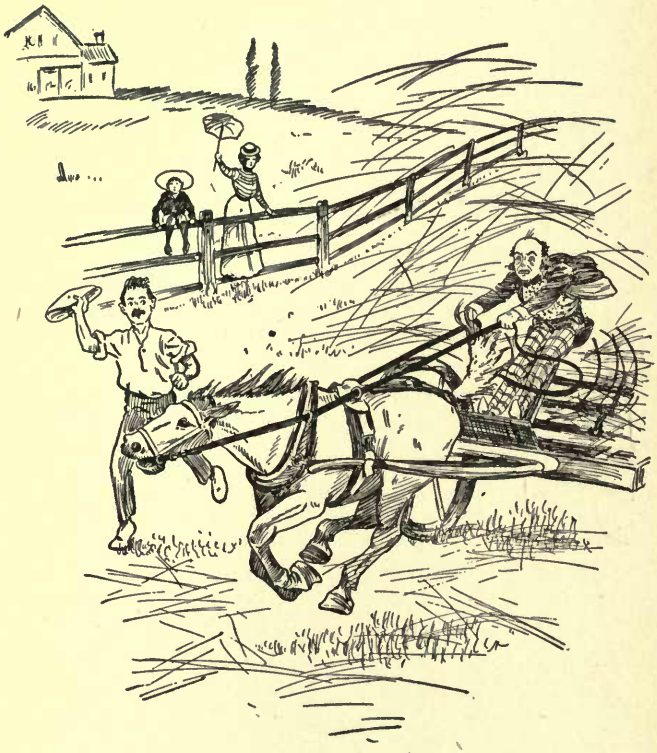
Which was true.

"You see," continued Mrs. Wigglesworth in explanation and pattering on behind as her husband stalked savagely up stairs, "Imogene's tooth ached so bad she could n't sleep, so she thought she would get up and put away the pickles I worked all day bottling, and she was scared enough when I came in on her — but the funniest thing, Ellery, was when she ran into you, with the last bottle in her hand, and you both were scared, and the bottle broke and you thought it was blood, and oh, Ellery — tee-he-he-he" ——

"Tee-he-he-he!" mimicked Mr. Wigglesworth, as he threw himself into bed; "why don't you act like a gash-flummuxed fool and be done with it?"

Chapter XVI

How Wigglesworth Showed Them Secrets of Haying



"'Ketch hold of her,' screamed Mr. Wigglesworth, sawing wildly at the reins."—*Page 157.*

CHAPTER XVI.—*How Wigglesworth Showed them Secrets of Haying*

SWEET blew the scents from the hayfield, and the sharp click of the horse mowers made music that filled the air and imparted a pleasant stir to the unusually quiet country.

Mr. and Mrs. Wigglesworth, up from town for a week's outing at Uncle Chesterfield's, stood on the kitchen verandah and admired the scene.

"How poetic it is," gushed Mrs. Wigglesworth, pressing her hands together in an ecstacy. "Don't you think it is delightfully pastoral, Ellery, and—and—all that—you know?"

"'T ain't half bad," acknowledged Mr. Wigglesworth, with an approving nod. "I 'd like to get at one of them mowing machines, he added, shifting his feet; "I 'd show 'em how to rip down an acre of grass. They 're altogether too slow, these country ducks. What they need is a little of our city snap."

Over in an adjacent lot Uncle Chesterfield, the sun smiting at his leathery countenance, soberly guided the mower into the upright ranks of grass, while the hired man, with a fiery face out of all character with his deliberate gestures, amused himself with a rake that he now and then combed through the fallen grass with a slow and dignified manner.

Mr. Wigglesworth stepped off the verandah.

"What are you going to do?" asked his wife.

"I'm going over and take a hand in that haymaking," replied Mr. Wigglesworth. "They won't get it done this summer at that rate."

"I wouldn't interfere if I were you," advised his wife.

"Oh, of course not," sneered Mr. Wigglesworth; "you'd have me set up here with my feet in my lap all summer, drinking buttermilk out of a dipper. That's the kind of a vacation you'd get up. Mrs Wigglesworth's fresh air fund, for sending people away from the city so they can't have any pleasure. That's your way."

"It's all so new, you know," murmured Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"New?" sniffed her husband, turning on her fiercely, "who said it was new? Wasn't I brought up on a farm, I'd like to know? Haven't I made more hay than a steam engine could haul?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth followed her husband across to the hayfield, shaking her head dubiously.

"Hullo!" called Mr. Wigglesworth as he climbed the fence.

Uncle Chesterfield pulled up his horses and the hired man seized the opportunity to transfer his weight to the other foot.

"Howdy do?" said Uncle Chesterfield, good-naturedly.

"Getting on kinder slow, ain't ye?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth

"Doin' perty well, I reckon," replied Uncle Chesterfield, wiping his face.

"We used to rush things faster when I was a boy," said Mr. Wigglesworth, "and we didn't have any machines either. 'F ye don't mind I'll take hold a bit and show ye how we used to push things along."

"Why, cert'nly — cert'nly," assented Uncle Chesterfield cordially. "Take right holt. Glad to hev ye."

At that moment a hay tedder, attached to a tall, bony horse, was driven into the field by a boy whose face had begun to freckle quite early in life and gradually increased in efficiency. Mr. Wigglesworth flung off his coat.

"Drive around this way!" he called to the boy with the home-made freckles.

The tedder was a machine hung between two wheels with a seat for the driver above. It was fraught with a number of wooden legs caught to some sort of gearing which, with the revolution of the wheels, kicked the legs out behind with a grasshopperlike action, flinging the prostrate hay about in all directions and opening it to the curing processes of the sun. Mr. Wigglesworth climbed into the seat and took the reins.

"Whoa!" he said, yanking at the reins to indicate to the bony horse that Wigglesworth was now in command, whereat the bony horse, uttering a loud snort, stood up on his two after feet and nearly brained the hired man with the others.

"What ye trying to do?" cried the hired man, startled into unwonted action.

"Whoa — stand still!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth as the bony horse exhibited an inclination to put his hind feet into Mr. Wigglesworth's lungs. "Get hold of his head, there, can't ye?" he yelled to the hired man; "what ye want to stand around there for like a fool, brandishing that pitchfork? No wonder he's scared."

With the exercise of some blandishments on the part of the hired man and the boy with the instantaneous freckles the bony horse was quieted and the performance went on.

There was something exhilarating in the exercise. The tedder rolled smoothly over the clear-reaped ground, kicking out with a spasmodic action, and filling the air full of the odoriferous hay. Turning the corner at the far end of the field Mr. Wigglesworth waved his hat to his wife who was watching him from the distant fence top.

"Wonder what she thinks of this!" he said to himself complacently, and he flung out his chest in an excess of pride.

"Get up, there!" he remarked prodding the bony horse with his pointed shoe.

Everybody knows that it is a mistake to hitch Pegasus to the plow, the operation usually resulting in dimming the ambition of Pegasus, but with the bony horse it was different. He had never been prodded behind before with a five dollar shoe, and his haughty nature resented it.

Looking up from his reverie the hired man was startled to see the bony horse tearing across the sward and the hay tedder gesticulating with the rapidity of an elocutionist. With the exercise of remarkable agility the hired man took one step and the flying tedder missed him by a hair.

"Ketch hold of her!" screamed Mr. Wigglesworth, sawing madly at the reins.

His hat was gone, his whiskers floated behind him with a loud, purring noise and his eyes, strained from their orbits with the energy of his manner, looked stonily ahead with an expression that foretold disaster. The hired man noted this and shuddered.

"Stop sawin' on the reins!" roared Uncle Chesterfield, as the procession went past the judge's stand, but Mr. Wigglesworth was instantly hull down on the horizon and the advice went out in air.

Round the field tore the bony horse, the legs of the tedder twinkling in the summer sun, filling the heavens with flying grass and the freckled face of the boy with wonder.

"Why don't ye do something?" shrieked Mr. Wigglesworth to the hired man as they once more came down the home stretch together, the bony horse leading and Mr. Wigglesworth a close second; "get an axe, can't ye, and jab into her?" but the hired man was already far behind and Mr. Wigglesworth's shriek spent itself in the neighboring county.

The momentary paralysis that had enveloped the joints and muscles of Mrs. Wigglesworth now sud-

denly released its hold. With horror clutching at her heart she had noted the wild bolting of the bony horse and the deadly peril that instantly enveloped her beloved Ellery. Just as quickly as she could do so she got down from the fence and tottered over the stubble.

Somewhere she had read that a wild animal, startled by something unexpected, can be shocked into docility. Filled with this great thought Mrs. Wigglesworth, uttering a shrill scream, rushed fearlessly in front of the flying horse and suddenly opened her red parasol.

"Shoo!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth.

The effect on the bony horse was electrical. There was no doubt of that. Standing up on his hind legs with great suddenness he gave utterance to a half human scream and executed a dance movement with incredible swiftness. With an auxiliary gesture he then smashed in the straw hat of the hired man before that deliberate gentleman could get his head out from under it.

The hay tedder made a remarkable exhibition as it followed the bony horse across the meadows, its eccentric legs prodding the air with a swiftness that never had been equalled. It would have been a sight to fascinate one had not Mrs. Wigglesworth suddenly discovered that the driver's seat was empty.

"Oh, where is Ellery?" she screamed, wildly brandishing the red umbrella.

And they discovered afterwards that the tedder

had him, holding him down with one leg and kicking him at rapid intervals with all the others.

"I hope you're satisfied, now," he hissed as they got him into bed with what tenderness they were capable of; "get me to make a fool of myself in the hayfield just to amuse you, and then you rush out and try to take my life with that gash-flummuxed old red umbrella. You're a darling wife, you are!"

But, really, Mrs. Wigglesworth said afterwards to the minister's wife, she was so glad that none of his legs were broken that she didn't care much what Ellery said to her.

And neither did he.

Chapter XVII

How Wigglesworth Enjoyed the Eclipse

"'Oh, yes,' cried Mr. Wigglesworth, glaring across the table, 'that's it.'"—*Page 163.*

CHAPTER XVII.—*How Wigglesworth Enjoyed the Eclipse*

"MRS. Wetherbee was in, this afternoon," said Mrs. Wigglesworth at supper.

"Well," growled her husband, who had had an uncomfortable day at the coal office, "what did she want to borrow?"

"She said," rejoined Mrs. Wigglesworth, unheeding the sarcasm, "that there was going to be an eclipse of the moon tonight"—

"Yah?" broke in Mr. Wigglesworth, "don't she s'pose I know that? Think I've got to have every fat woman in town with a mole on her chin running round to tell me things like them? I saw more than a hundred eclipses 'fore old Wetherbee and his wife were born."

"She came to ask us," Mrs. Wigglesworth resumed when her husband's mouth was filled with toast, "if we didn't want to come over to their house and watch it?"

"Watch what—the house?"

"No, the eclipse. You know, they have a large telescope, and she thought—"

"Oh, yes," cried Mr. Wigglesworth, glaring across the table, "that's it. Ever since them Wetherbees had a little money left 'em they put on airs till they make me sick. Think they're the only ones who are going to have an eclipse, don't they? Wetherbee's

special line of eclipses. Don't take any eclipses until you've seen Wetherbee's. Patronize Wetherbee; his eclipses are out of sight. I hate such stuck-up people. What I can't seem to understand," he snarled in conclusion, and with sudden change of front, "is how that hired girl of yours always manages to give us such a stone-cold cup of tea with the same fire that she burns the toast up with!"

Mrs. Wigglesworth divined by this time that it had been a poor day for business, so she said nothing further, while her husband went out to nail a picket on the fence, and in the gathering twilight contrived to strike a nail with every blow of the hammer.

"Ain't ye ready yet?" he shouted as he rattled into the house, by and by, nursing his thumb.

"Ready for what?" asked his wife in a mild voice as she got him the arnica.

"Ready for what?" snapped Mr. Wigglesworth, taking his thumb out of his mouth so as to give his voice free sway, "why, for the eclipse, of course. Didn't ye say the Wetherbees wanted us to come over there? What ye trying to act out, anyway? Don't ye know what common politeness is when folks give ye an invitation?"

Somewhat dizzy with the powerful veerings of her husband's mental compass Mrs. Wigglesworth hurried on her wrap.

"So glad to see you!" cooed Mrs. Wetherbee, shaking hands.

"Yes—step right up on the verandah," Mr.

Wetherbee said, pulling forward some uncomfortable summer chairs.

"Nice night," said Mr. Wigglesworth wiping his forehead.

"Yes, I was saying to Ellery on the way over," chirped Mrs. Wigglesworth, "that I thought it one of the nicest nights for an eclipse that I ever saw, especially of the moon. Do you know if it is to be a — total eclipse, Mr. Wetherbee?"

"The whole box and dice," asserted Mr. Wetherbee.

"How perfectly lovely," exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth; "these — er — partial eclipses are so sort of unsatisfying, and all that, don't you think, Mrs. Wetherbee?"

"Step up on the roof and have a look at the telescope," suggested their host.

"Cost two hundred and fifty dollars," he explained, as they stood about the long brass cylinder, and felt of the glass with their moist hands. "It's a dandy, so the man said I got it of."

"Does it make things seem awfully near to?" Mrs. Wigglesworth asked.

"What's the use to ask such numb questions as that?" muttered her husband, who hadn't found opportunity to put in a word all the evening; "think they got it to conceal bank defalcations, don't ye?"

It wanting an hour of the advertised time of the eclipse, Mr. Wetherbee suggested that they go below and have a cigar, and while he entertained Mr. Wigglesworth with a long and circumstantial account of

an operation in stocks, wherein the Wetherbee shrewdness was admirably set forth by the lips of Wetherbee, Mrs. Wigglesworth gave, for the benefit of Mrs. Wetherbee, a full and unabridged description of the difficulty which Willie, when a baby, had experienced in cutting his own teeth himself for the first time. Then when the hour had flown sufficiently they returned to the roof.

"You may look first," said Mr. Wetherbee, training the telescope towards the moon.

"I can't see anything," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, anxiously.

"Oh, I forgot to open the slide," apologized the exhibitor. "Now try it."

"But it's just as dark as before," protested Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"You're shutting up both eyes," derided her husband; "better open one of 'em."

"O-o-h-h!" gurgled Mrs. Wigglesworth, acting on this hint, "how perfectly lovely! I never saw such a bright moon in my life! Look at it, Ellery."

They all looked at it, by turns, and admired the dark places which Mrs. Wetherbee said she believed were burned-out volcanoes, and quite deep, when you came to measure them.

"But I don't seem to see where the eclipse comes in," observed Wetherbee after another long look. "She seems to be sailing along in full regalia. And it's half an hour after time."

"Perhaps something is out of fix and has delayed

it a little while," suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth. "You know how it was with the fireworks at Central Park that time, Ellery?"

"Hark!" said Mrs. Wetherbee, raising a warning hand. "I thought I heard somebody calling."

"Hullo, up there!" came a voice from the front yard.

"It's the minister's voice," said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"What are you doing?" asked the minister, when greetings had been exchanged.

"We're watching the eclipse," responded Mr. Wetherbee; "or at least waiting for it," he hastened to add.

"But the eclipse doesn't come off till tomorrow," said the minister, earnestly.

"What's the reason it don't" retorted Wetherbee, in a nettled manner.

"Because," explained the minister, "an eclipse can only occur at the full of the moon, and the moon doesn't full this month until Tuesday, and this is only Monday, you know. You must have made a mistake in the date."

"My wife did that," Wetherbee proudly returned. "She got her information out of a Sunday paper," he added, raising his voice above the horrified pleadings of his wife, while the minister walked away, shaking his head.

"I hope you'll get enough of your Wetherbees," hissed Mr. Wigglesworth, after they had walked toward home for some moments in moody silence;

"ever since that old rip of an uncle died and left them a few dollars, you 've done nothing but run your feet off prancing around after 'em, and I 've had 'em with my meals till I'm worn out. We 'd 'a' been perched up on that tarred roof till the sun rose, with that second-hand brass microscope poked into the heavens, looking like idiots, if it hadn't been for the minister."

Mrs. Wiggleworth's heart swelled with church pride.

"Ain't he the smartest minister you ever saw!" she cried, in excess of admiration. "He knew the minute he saw us up there that it was the wrong night. I declare, I never saw such a man — did you, Ellery?"

"Y-a-a-h-h!" snorted Mr. Wigglesworth, as he kicked open the front door.

Chapter XVIII

How Wigglesworth Set Up the Stove

"'Where's that hired girl?' snarled Mr. Wigglesworth, pausing to wipe his face." — *Page 173.*

CHAPTER XVIII.—*How Wigglesworth Set Up the Stove*

"B–R–R–R–R!" shuddered Mr. Wigglesworth as he came in from the office; "this house is cold's a barn!"

"I know it,' said Mrs. Wigglesworth, pulling a shawl more closely about her. "I sent Willie down to the store for a man to come and set up the little parlor stove, but he was too busy today."

"What ye want to rush into expense like that for?" demanded Mr. Wigglesworth virtuously; "ain't they crowd enough of us, I'd like to know, to set up an eighty-pound stove, without paying a man two dollars to come and leave an impression of his smutty hand on the parlor paper?"

"But it ain't blacked," said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Well, why ain't it?" said Mr. Wigglesworth; "what's that hired girl doing, I'd like to ask, that she can't find time to smear a little blacking around where it's needed? Been putting a full library binding on one of those fireproof pies, I s'pose, or arranging a loaf of her impervious cake. Where is that stove?"

He charged out into the shed, where the stove was discovered, after a considerable search, buried under a wealth of debris such as the North American shed knows so well how to accumulate.

"You're a dandy housekeeper, ain't ye?" growled Mr. Wigglesworth as he fought his way toward the stove, while his wife stood on a box and volunteered

advice. "Always have things handy, you do! 'Hints On Housekeeping,' by Mrs. Wigglesworth, in two volumes, with full glossary and key. Specially recommended for young people who have their own house and want to keep it themselves. That's what you are."

To this running accompaniment Mr. Wigglesworth carved his way through the debris, pausing now and then, when he encountered an ambushed nail, to put his fingers into his mouth, and imparting thereby a weird tone to the howl that he gave vent to.

"Who nailed the thing down?" he angrily called, as he finally got in where his hands could grip the stove. He was bent over in the most painful manner, which afforded him but little breath to spare. Everybody knows how mad that makes a man.

"I think," Mrs. Wigglesworth timidly ventured, "that it's heavier than you thought."

"Oh, yes," growled Mr. Wigglesworth, "you're a great thinker, you are. You're the woman that stands around on one foot thinking up things for the heathen. I've read about you in the literary reviews. 'Thoughts That Mrs. Wigglesworth Has Thought Of.' Particularly designed for people who have to have their thinking done elsewhere. Why don't ye come and catch hold here?" he yelled.

"Mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Wigglesworth, startled from her perch by the intensity of her husband's command; "I didn't know you wanted me to help!"

"What's the reason ye didn't?" returned Mr

Wigglesworth. "Think I've got the only back in the family that needs breaking? Want me to pull my arms out to double length, don't ye, so's you can use me to feel around on the top shelves of closets and find things? That's what you want."

"It's — it's awful heavy," complained Mrs. Wigglesworth as she bent over and fastened her grasp on the iron edge.

"Poh!" sniffed her husband, "there ye go first thing, finding fault. Why don't ye lift, and not stop to growl so much?"

The setting sun, looking negligently in at the cobwebbed window, imparted an almost unearthly radiance to the distorted countenance of Mr. Wigglesworth as he strained at the refractory stove, and so set a noble example to his wife, which that worthy woman so ably emulated as to burst both back seams of her waist.

"Where's that hired girl!" snarled Mr. Wigglesworth, pausing to wipe his face and so ornamenting himself with some artistic smooches of soot. "What ye got her concealed for just the time we need her most? Thinks she's too good to lift on a parlor stove, prob'ly. Has to save her strength for the dance to-morrow night."

Mrs. Wigglesworth called to Imogene, who came out, wiping her hands on the cup towel.

"Here!" directed Mr. Wigglesworth, "you two women take hold of the top and I'll snatch out the lower end, see?"

Whether Imogene possessed a strength hitherto undreamed of, or the earlier efforts had disengaged the cumbering kindlings and other impedimenta from about the stove legs, it remains a fact that the very first boost sent the whole procession careering rockily across the shed floor, the stove surging and toppling and Mr. Wigglesworth's vertebræ sending forth a creaking noise that was ominous.

"Put it down!" he grunted, as loud as his bent position would admit. "What ye trying to do, anyway?" he blustered as he straightened up and glared at his assistants; "want to snap me in two?"

"It seemed to come itself," panted Mrs. Wigglesworth, looking at the stove.

"Course it did," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth scornfully; "leave it alone and it would waltz clean into the parlor, prob'ly, stick its pipe into the chimney and go to smoking. Great stove, that!" he added, and then stopped a few minutes to grin over the unexpected joke he'd made.

"Now ketch hold again," he ordered, and this time he took the lighter end himself, while Mrs. Wigglesworth and Imogene tugged with freshened zeal at the opposite extremity.

Across the cluttered shed floor they went slowly shuffling, their heels occasionally catching against things and threatening disaster, while Mrs. Wigglesworth, whose tender hands were lacerating, dropped hot tears from her bulging eyes and occasionally hoisted up a sob.

"What ye bellering at!" puffed Mr. Wigglesworh; "don't ye know any better than to cry all over a cast iron stove and rust it? Great household economizer, you are!"

Then they came to the step that rises from the shed to the kitchen door, and Mr. Wigglesworth, by virtue of bearing the lighter end, essayed to take this backward.

"Careful, now!" he shouted, as Imogene, in proof that she was not exhausted, gave an energetic shove; "you ain't washing dishes this time; be a little easier!"

Then he stepped gingerly upward and his female coadjutors trailed behind.

"Lift! why don't ye lift?" he shouted, as the effort of stepping upward communicated unexpected weight to his burden; "think I'm going to do it all —wow!"

The concluding remark was forced out of him suddenly, as the bung leaves a fermented beer keg, by the unexpected enthusiasm of Imogene, who, giving a shoulder grandly, sent the stove full into Mr. Wigglesworth's stomach and pinned that gentleman against the kitchen door, just as the woman who lived next door opened it. She had come in to borrow an unused egg, and hearing voices in the shed came out to to investigate. From her account, the neighbors learned how, when the door fell open, Mr. Wigglesworth shot suddenly into the back entry and plunged his shoulders under the refrigerator, while the parlor

stove following closely after, sat itself cosily down upon his legs and so kept him from kicking holes in the plastering.

"But it was dreadful," shuddered the woman who lived next door, "to stand there and hear the things that Mr. Wigglesworth was saying, though you could n't exactly hear them, either, for his head was under the refrigerator, and all the sounds were muffled as they came through the zinc lining. I don't know what we would have done if the iceman had n't come in just then and pulled the stove off Mr. Wigglesworth."

And shaking her head she passed through the crowd of neighbors, bearing the borrowed egg carefully in her hand.

Chapter XIX

How Wigglesworth Revived His Shooting

"'Sh!' hissed Mr. Wigglesworth with an angry whisper, 'Can't ye keep quiet? She's on the point.'" — *Page 181.*

CHAPTER XIX.—*How Wigglesworth Revived His Shooting*

THE crisp October air, the brilliant foliage blazing athwart the woods, the distant hills floating in a languorous purple haze, served to arouse all the enthusiasm with which the nature of Mr. Wigglesworth is so liberally endowed. He came home that evening laden with a gunning outfit, borrowed of a sporting friend, and towing a lank, red dog, whose tail persistently clung inside his hindmost legs.

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth, as she caught sight of the gun, and clapping her hands to her ears, "what have you got there?"

"What ye s'pose it is?" answered Mr. Wigglesworth, yanking the refractory dog through the door; "looks like a pound of corned beef, don't it."

"Why, of course, I know it is a gun," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, "but do be careful of it, Ellery. Ain't it loaded?"

"Loaded?" sneered Mr. Wigglesworth, kicking the dog from under the lounge, "what ye think it is, a freight car? Think it's been out with the boys, don't ye? Come out of that!" he growled, snatching the lank dog from the lounge whence he instantly took refuge under the piano.

"He's scared," said Mrs. Wigglesworth. "Poo' 'ittle doggie—pmsp, pmsp—come here—that's a

nice 'ittle doggie," she coaxed, whereupon the dog waltzed suddenly from his piano retreat and sprang into Mrs. Wigglesworth's lap.

They got the animal tied up in the shed finally, and Mr. Wigglesworth explained, as they had supper, his plans for a day in the woods.

"I didn't know you could shoot," said his wife, as she served the sauce.

"Shoot?" returned Mr. Wigglesworth, "what's the reason you didn't? I was one of the greatest shots in town when we lived on a farm. None of the boys could get ahead of me, except the Dodley twins."

"But ain't you afraid?" persisted Mrs Wigglesworth.

"Ain't that like a woman?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, taking the sideboard into his confidence. "What ye going to be afraid of?"

"Why, suppose," conjectured Mrs. Wigglesworth, "suppose your gun should go off when you weren't looking, and you should get in front of it, and it should shoot a hole in your neck — then what would you do I'd like to know?"

"What would I do?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth with his finest sarcasm, "what ye s'pose? Breathe through it, of course. That's what holes in the neck are for. What d'ye think I'd do, tie a yellow ribbon in it and go to a dedication ball? Thought I'd speak a piece through it, didn't ye?"

With which airy persiflage Mr. Wigglesworth regaled the table, meantime perfecting plans for the

morrow, agreeing, at their earnest solicitation, to take his wife and Willie along, and arranging finally for an early start. The early start was easy, for Mr. Wigglesworth was awake nearly all the night in a fruitless attempt to stifle, by discharging things at the roof of the shed, the lank dog's awful and unremitting howls.

They got over the line fence and found themselves in a fair bit of meadowland with some trees and bushes at the far side. Tramping across the crisp, brown grass the blood in Mr. Wigglesworth's veins tingled with enthusiasm.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "what is the matter with the dog?"

"'Sh!" hissed Mr. Wigglesworth, with an angry whisper, "can't ye keep quiet? He's on a point. Don't ye know anything?"

"What kind of a point is it, Ellery?" said Mrs. Wigglesworth, earnestly.

"Keep back!" hoarsely aspirated her husband; "have some sense, can't ye? I'll nail a bird in a minute."

Mrs. Wigglesworth crouched in the background and observed the singular actions of the lank dog, who stood with his head rigidly fixed and his tail quivering emotionally. Mr. Wigglesworth assumed, for some moments, a contorted attitude of expectation, and then an old hen came chuckling out of the grass and the dog greeted her effusively.

"What is it, Ellery?" called Mrs. Wigglesworth excitedly; "why don't you shoot?"

"Why don't you keep yelling all the time?" snapped Mr. Wigglesworth; "think I brought you along to enjoy your conversation, don't ye? What ails ye, you old fool!" he added angrily, aiming a kick at the dog; "don't ye know a hen when you see her?"

Then they moved on.

"Now stop your yap," directed Mr. Wigglesworth, "'cause we're right onto the birds. Steady, there, steady!" he said to the dog, who was growing stiff again.

Mrs. Wigglesworth and Willie had n't yet got past the fence. The former was crawling carefully through the rails, while Willie, with boyish spirit essayed to go over them, and the top rail broke at exactly the right moment to let that interesting young man down on his mother's back, evoking from her a frightened yell that was heard by a man painting a barn over behind the mountain.

Two beautiful brown partridge, startled by this unwonted noise, beat the long roll on their muffled drums and soared grandly away.

"There you are!" howled Mr. Wigglesworth, dancing up and down and brandishing his gun; "what kind of a fool performance are you getting off now? Don't ye know better than to scare the game that way?"

"Please help me out," pleaded Mrs. Wigglesworth, still fastened by the rail, and her husband did so, with a suddenness that fetched her breath with it.

Mr. Wigglesworth moodily wiped his forehead.

"Let's have no more of this foolishness," he said severely. "D'ye think I came out here to act the monkey for you and this boy?"

Half an hour later — it seemed an excellent day for the birds, Mr. Wigglesworth thought — the lank dog again came to anchor on the edge of some inviting bushes and in a moment a long-billed woodcock took wing. With his old-time skill Mr. Wigglesworth's gun came to shoulder, the right and left locks clicked in sharp succession, and the bird, a dark brown streak, vanished down the glen.

"Did you hit it?" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth from the distance. Her hands were over her ears, and she had heard no report. Neither did she catch her husband's answering remark. Every sportsman who has thrown his gun upon a bird without previously slipping in a cartridge understands that it is no moment for the idle questionings of an unsympathetic woman.

"It's awfully hot," complained Mrs. Wigglesworth at the end of another hour's tramp; "and this lunch-basket's getting heavier every minute."

So they sat down to eat.

"Why don't you shoot something?" purred Mrs. Wigglesworth as they ate away. "It seems an awful waste of time to walk so far and not get anything."

"You understand the whole thing, you do," growled Mr. Wigglesworth. "You ought to get out another book about it. 'Mrs. Wigglesworth's Game Birds of North America, with full directions how to play the game.'"

Gradually the afternoon and the high heels on Mrs. Wigglesworth's shoes wore away. She never knew, she said to the minister's wife, how many miles they walked, because they went in large circles, but it was a good many, she knew, for Ellery's shoulder was all blistered, carrying the gun. The lank dog times without number had gone wagging into the brush, only to come back again and discouragedly sit himself down and shake his head despondently. Then at the last, when hope had well-nigh passed away, a scent once more was struck, the dog again came rigidly to point and a noble bird broke cover.

"Hit it — hit it!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth.

Mr. Wigglesworth took quick aim and fired. Rather, he pulled the trigger, knowing a cartridge was in place, but there came no answering report. With a smothered howl of rage he dashed the gun to the ground. The shock produced an explosion. The lank, red dog, standing expectantly in the foreground, found occasion to regret that position, for the charge of shot had exactly the right direction to rake a channel diagonally across his back. With a shriek of surprise he whirled and ran between Mr. Wigglesworth's legs, upsetting that frightened gentleman, and then espying Mrs. Wigglesworth sitting on a rock near by, and recalling her friendly sympathy of the previous evening, he precipitated himself once more into that lady's lap and rolled himself rapidly over and over in a vain attempt to assuage that blazing back.

"It will cost you $25 for shooting on my premises," said a red-faced man, as the party laboredly climbed the fence into the road; and he pointed to a sign to that effect.

"But I think," protested Mrs. Wigglesworth, as they wended their painful way homeward, "that it's just too mean for anything to charge $25 when you didn't shoot anything but just your own dog, and even that was a borrowed one — and, O Ellery, do you suppose the man who lent you the poor dog will ——"

"Why don't you close your head?" advised Mr. Wigglesworth.

Chapter XX

How Wigglesworth Kept a Horse

"'O, Ellery,' she screamed with a woman's presence of mind, 'come away instantly.'"—*Page 192.*

CHAPTER XX.—*How Wigglesworth Kept a Horse.*

"THERE it is!" gleefully cried Mr. Wigglesworth, running to the window.

Mrs. Wigglesworth followed in a flutter. It was her birthday, and she'd been hoping since morning that her husband would remember it. She saw a fat, red-faced man leading a tall sorrel horse into the yard.

"What — what is it, Ellery?" she asked, in mild wonderment.

"What is it?" echoed Mr. Wigglesworth, smartly, "it's a horse, of course. Wha' d'ye s'pose it was — a boiled dinner? Thought the man was leading in a farm mortgage, didn't ye?"

"And did you get it for me?" chirped Mrs. Wigglesworth, clapping her hands. "Oh, how good of you, Ellery, to remember that it was my birthday!" So she kissed her husband on his whiskers — women love to kiss their husbands on their whiskers — and putting an apron over her head she followed him out of doors. The tall sorrel horse had his nose in the air and was wrinkling his lips back over his forehead in a peculiar fashion. Now and then he would thrust one foot out toward the horizon in an impromptu way, and look disappointed when the red-faced man turned out to be elsewhere.

"Where'll I put 'im?" asked the red-faced man.

He also had a hoarse voice that rumbled, and at sound of which the sorrel horse would stand up in the air till he felt the red-faced man's fat weight at the end of the halter, and then he would come down again, reaching for the red-faced man as he did so, but unfortunately missing him again. After some trouble the animal was got into the stall in the little stable and the red-faced man went away, while Imogene came out and gathered up the line-full of clothes that had been cast down and stepped on.

"You see, it's this way," Mr. Wigglesworth explained in a voice of pride, as they were eating supper; "I thought it would be a good thing for you to have a horse this spring, and get out of doors more. So I went to a man I know and told him what I wanted, and he's sent up just the thing — a woman's driving horse — one that a child can handle. Quite a surprise, wasn't it?" he added, with the self-complacency that a man assumes in doing a thing without consulting his wife.

"Oh, it's too delightful for anything!" cooed Mrs. Wigglesworth. "But do you think I can drive him? Doesn't he seem rather — er — tall? Not so awfully tall," she hastened to add, noting her husband's falling countenance, "but — but — just —"

"Oh, yes, of course," said Mr. Wigglesworth, holding his knife and fork on end and addressing the sideboard, "he's too tall. I oughter thought of that. Might have looked around and found one with short legs, so the hired girl could go over him with the

carpet sweeper. That's the kind of a horse for us!"

They talked the matter over after supper. Mr. Wigglesworth said he was going to take care of the animal himself, as what he needed in the spring was exercise, to work the accumulated sluggishness of winter out of his blood. Mrs. Wigglesworth said she was going to learn to put the bridle onto him — onto the horse — without standing on a chair, and afternoons, she said, she would drive around by the office and bring her husband home to supper, for she knew how tired he must be after a hard day's work.

There was considerable pawing around in the stable during the night.

"Don't you think you best take the lantern and go see if everything is all right?" Mrs. Wigglesworth suggested. "Perhaps his blanket has slipped off."

"Well, it'll stay slipped off for all of me," retorted her husband. "Want me to go out and get stepped on, don't ye? Think it would be a good idea to stir up his pillow and put a hot water bottle to his feet, I s' pose. Guess he's used to sleeping alone. Probably he's having strange dreams, first time in a new stable, so. Nightmare, prob'ly." This conceit so amused Mr. Wigglesworth that he lay awake a long time chuckling at it.

But early in the morning, just as the first rays of dawn were slanting downward over Sawyer's barn, there was a succession of tremendous noises that called Mr. Wigglesworth hastily from bed, and he rushed, half-dressed, toward the stable. When Mrs.

Wigglesworth soon after got there, her blood stood still with horror of the sight that met her gaze. The tall sorrel horse had his two front legs over the side of the stall, and with his neck stretched to the farthest limits of the halter was making frantic gestures toward Mr. Wigglesworth, who had climbed hastily upon a feed-box in the corner and was convulsively clinging to the wall, with a look on his face that his wife never had seen there before.

"Oh, Ellery!" she screamed, with a woman's ready presence of mind; "come away instantly!"

"Come away!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, making himself still flatter against the wall as the sorrel horse essayed another grab and tore off one of his suspenders, "oh, of course — that's it — that's all I want to do — just wave my hand to the conductor and get aboard and ring two bells and go ahead! Wouldn't have thought of that if you hadn't — wow!" and he fetched another shriek as the sorrel stretched the halter an added inch and snorted a cupful of foam down Mr. Wigglesworth's neck.

"What ye standing there for?" he yelled. "Don't ye see I can't move without losing my life and all I v'e got on?"

"What shall I do?" wailed his wife, wringing her hands.

"Do? Why get an axe and chop his blamed old head off! Go get a wood auger and bore a hole in him somewhere and see if that won't take his attention? Go —"

Mrs. Wigglesworth was a woman who could be roused to momentous situations. She came down from the stairs and waved her apron gently.

"Shoo!" she said to the sorrel horse.

"That's it!" her husband cried, "that's the way to shoo a horse!" and ghastly as the humor seemed to be he found himself smiling at it. But his wonder redoubled when the sorrel horse, after looking at Mrs. Wigglesworth for a moment with a surprised air, slipped demurely down from the edge of the stall and began scratching his neck reflectively on the manger.

"There you are," said Mr. Wigglesworth, climbing down from the box and cautiously approaching the stall. The animal had his eyes closed, and Mr. Wigglesworth as he took hold of the halter, remembering his suspender, could not forbear giving it a vicious little jerk.

What followed, Mrs. Wigglesworth explained to the doctors. The tall sorrel, she said, when he felt the jerk at the halter, seemed to turn and shoot a hasty but astonished look at her husband. Mr. Wigglesworth's hands appeared glued to the halter, she said, for when the sorrel stood up on his hind legs and walked out of the stall, Mr. Wigglesworth came with him, swinging back and forth like the pendulum to a clock, only faster. When the sorrel got out in the barn floor he looked around for Mrs. Wigglesworth, but failing to discover her at first, he performed a few complicated dance movements, such as

circus horses make, leaving portions of Mr. Wigglesworth's clothing and cuticle upon the studding and rafters of the stable as he went along. Then he put his arm around that gentleman and charged out of doors. Imogene had just time to look over her shoulder and see the procession coming, and then drop her clothes basket and crawl under the stoop. When the sorrel horse came down, again missing Imogene by an inch, he put his off hind foot through the clothes basket and wore it away with him.

It made one of the best items of news the local paper ever printed, and even got copied into a city daily, with pictures. People coming out of their houses would see Mr. Wigglesworth every few minutes going into the air, and then coming down, closely followed by the sorrel horse, with his leg thrust through the basket, and accumulating mud which ever and anon he would shake off upon the bystanders as he went hurtling past.

Half an hour later Mr. Wigglesworth climbed slowly up the stoop, a fragment of the halter, apparently forgotten, showing in his hands.

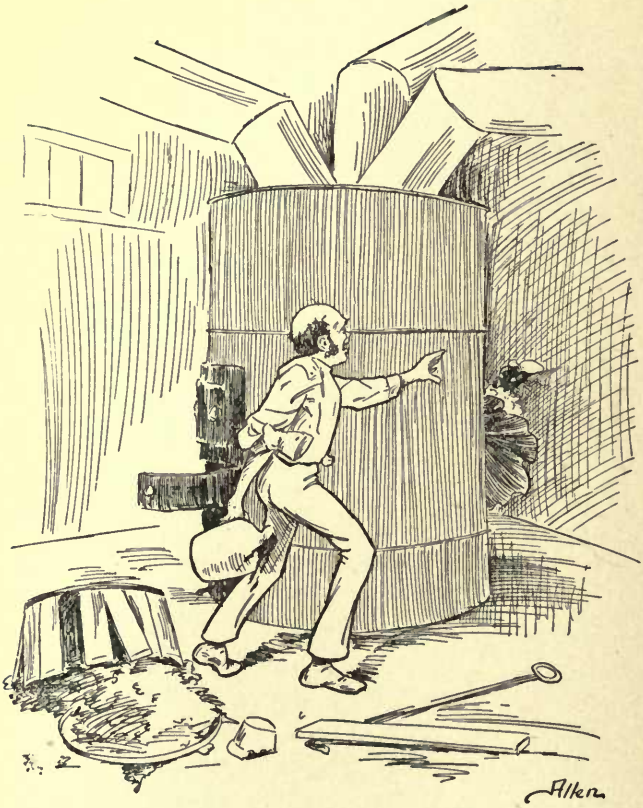
"My darling, darling Ellery!" sobbed his wife, with a pale face, tottering forward.

"Don't ye fall on me!" warned Mr. Wigglesworth, the passionate lines on his face growing deeper; "don't ye come whining around here asking for any more family horses warranted to stand without hitching! The kind of a family horse you want is a gentle, long-eared donkey, and blamed if I don't wish you'd got one before you ever saw me!"

And in explaining it afterwards to the minister's wife, Mrs. Wigglesworth said it did seem queer that Ellery should lay it all onto her, when the horse was just as much of a surprise to her as it was to anybody. Especially Mr. Wigglesworth.

Chapter XXI

How Wigglesworth Cared for Wetherbee's Oleander



"Therefore they knew that the weight of the oleander had temporarily unhinged his reason."— *Page 204.*

CHAPTER XXI.—*How Wigglesworth Cared for Wetherbee's Oleander*

"WHAT'S that?" coldly inquired Mr. Wigglesworth on coming home to supper.

In the corner of the room stood a tall, tree-like plant that he 'd never seen before.

"It 's an oleander," chirped Mrs. Wigglesworth, waving her arms toward the shrub with a gesture of delight.

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Wigglesworth, regarding it with an unfavorable eye—with two unfavorable eyes, in fact.

The oleander stood six feet high and its spread of limb was surprising, disclosing branches that embodied every variety of twist and displayed their eccentricity the more that a larger part of their foliage had fallen off. Moreover, it reared itself from a large, round tub painted a bright blue color, and over the dirt in which the roots were embedded trailed a variety of spools and scraps of paper and cotton cloth and charred matches and hairpins and other things that indoor plants understand so well how to accumulate.

"Yes," added Mrs. Wigglesworth, as they sat down to supper, "it is a present from Mrs. Wetherbee. She heard me saying that mother used to have an oleander when I was a girl, and so she sent this one over today.

You know they are going South to spend the winter, Ellery, so, of course, they won't need it."

Mr. Wigglesworth worked the point of his knife into another biscuit.

"I think it was awfully nice of Mrs. Wetherbee," added Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"That's so," assented her husband; "great philanthropists, them Wetherbees. Prob'ly wanted to take it South with 'em but thinkin' you'd be lonesome with nobody but a hired girl to talk to they sent it over here. That's the kind of neighbors the Wetherbees are."

"Will — will you help me with it, after supper?" ventured Mrs. Wigglesworth, timidly.

"Help ye with it?" repeated Mr. Wigglesworth in a tone of surprise.

"Yes," explained his wife, playing nervously with the hem of the tablecloth, "it's — it's got to go down cellar, you know."

Mr. Wigglesworth laid his knife and fork on the table and stared stonily at his wife.

"What's the matter with its taking up the east half of the sitting room?" he demanded, recovering his tongue. "Can't ye find room for Wigglesworth in the parlor? Put Wigglesworth out in the front hall, can't ye?"

"They always do keep them in the cellar, winters," pouted Mrs. Wigglesworth, following her husband to the other room.

Mr. Wigglesworth regarded the oleander, standing

stiffly erect, and a look of malevolence invaded his features.

"Think I'm going to saw a hole in the floor?" he demanded sourly.

"Can't you carry it down stairs?" Mrs. Wigglesworth suggested.

"Perhaps I could if I were a derrick," retorted her husband. "What d'ye think I am, an elevator? Pull a wire rope and I'll go to the fourth floor with a load of fat women, you prob'ly think."

Stooping under the lower branches of the plant, he made a sudden snatch at the tub handles and tore one of them away.

"That's a nice kind of a tub to send out oleanders in, ain't it?" he cried, and he kicked off some of the blue paint.

"Here's Imogene," said Mrs. Wigglesworth; "she'll help you."

"You get under there and catch hold of the bottom of the tub," ordered Mr. Wigglesworth, and the hired girl did so. "Now lift her over," he added, "while I grab the thing around the waist."

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth, who was holding open the door, "you're hitting the chandelier!"

Even as she called there was a spluttering crash, the chandelier rocked violently and one of the globes fell from its moorings. Inevitably it would have smashed on the floor, had it not been neatly intercepted by Mr. Wigglesworth's head, on which it perched itself with notable airiness.

"Wow!" yelled Mr. Wigglesworth, for the gas had been long enough lighted to heat the globe to a lively temperature. Only for a few brief seconds did it hold its coign of vantage — only, in short, while Mr. Wigglesworth was prancing through the folding doors into the parlor and back again, lashing the air with his arms and screaming, and then he discovered what the matter was and hurled the offending globe through a window.

Mrs. Wigglesworth put some witch hazel upon her husband's bald top, around which the globe had scorched a little brown nimbus.

"Be careful what you're doing, now," he growled to Imogene, and they got the oleander to the top of the cellar stairs, while Mrs. Wigglesworth stayed behind to pick up the remains of an imitation marble statue and a picture of Napoleon in the act of crossing the Alps on a horse with three legs in the air at one time, which the young tree had clawed from the walls in passing.

"Let me get ahead there," commanded Mr. Wigglesworth, and he crawled under the oleander and squeezed himself into the narrow cellarway, along with Imogene and the tub. "What ails the thing?" he muttered, pulling at the tree, which had become wedged in the door; "why don't it come through?"

"It ain't short enough," said the hired girl.

"Ain't short enough?" retorted Mr. Wiggleworth, "what ye think it is — pie crust? Want to get a chance to put in two pounds more of that thirty-cent butter, don't ye?"

With extraordinary exercise of energy Mr. Wigglesworth rocked the tub forward and back.

"What makes the thing stick so?" he panted, straining anew. "What ye doing on the other end there?" he called to his wife.

"I'm holding it," Mrs. Wigglesworth answered, "just as tight as I can, Ellery, so it won't slip down cellar and crush you."

Earnestly desiring to do the most helpful thing in the world, Mrs. Wigglesworth had grasped the end of the oleander that projected into the kitchen, and with her feet braced against the pantry door was holding on till her eyes stood out.

Mr. Wigglesworth fairly snorted in his wrath.

"Leggo of it!" he roared passionately. "Think I'm going to pull my lungs out in this dark cellarway and step on 'em? Get off the end of that tree!"

When Mrs. Wigglesworth released her hold, the oleander, sensible of the momentum that Mr. Wigglesworth's energy had imparted to it, smiled an almost human smile and did what every oleander has done since Adam, as a personal favor to Eve, undertook to carry the primal oleander down into their cave cellar. Imogene, giving voice to a single shriek, cleared the stairs at a bound and scuttled behind the furnace.

"Get out — stop it — take it off — wow!" roared Mr. Wigglesworth, but the narrow walls kept back his cries from the police and there was none to help.

Imogene, peering in fright around the furnace, saw a bright blue procession shoot down the stairs. Even

as it passed, the oleander, with a light and frolicsome laugh, reached up and removed from the surrounding shelves and hooks such pans and kettles and crocks of milk and things put by on plates to warm up for breakfast as it could lay its hands upon, and with these to aid and abet its flight it kept on to where a brick chimney, arising near the foot of the stairs, arrested its progress.

"Ellery — my darling Ellery!" called Mrs. Wigglesworth, peering agonizedly down through the dust.

She saw her husband prone upon his back, wedged against the chimney. The tub had fallen squarely upon him, and bursting its hoops had sifted the dirt over him in a huge conical pile, out of which the oleander strutted aloft, wearing upon its triumphant branches a variety of things which she hadn't time to enumerate.

Uttering a shriek, Mrs. Wigglesworth bolted for the neighbors.

When they got back they found Mr. Wigglesworth and the hired girl dodging each other around the furnace. Mr. Wigglesworth had a jug in his hand, out of which flowed a stream of molasses, and as this trickled down the knees of his trousers, he laughed horribly.

Therefore they knew that the weight of the oleander had temporarily unhinged his reason.

Chapter XXII

How Wigglesworth Studied Art

"'Is — is that oatmeal?' he slowly inquired." — *Page 210.*

CHAPTER XXII.—*How Wigglesworth Studied Art*

MRS. WIGGLESWORTH had her face knit up into the expression that goes along with critical admiration, and she stood alternately thrusting her head forward and drawing it back again, then directing a side glance, then projecting a number of little nods and tapping her foot gently.

"What ye acting out now?" grinned Mr. Wigglesworth from the door.

"Oh!" said his wife, with a little scream, "is it you, Ellery?"

"'Course it's me," returned Mr. Wigglesworth, plucking off his coat with emphasis, for things had gone ill at the office; "can't ye identify your own husband? Thought it was the man with the iron mask, didn't ye? What ye got there?"

"It's a pastel," cooed Mrs. Wigglesworth, coming back to the object of her previous solicitations; "I've just finished it, in our painting class, you know. Mrs. Wetherbee says she thinks it is nice."

"Humph!" commented Mr. Wigglesworth, going up to the table, "what kind of a thing is it? What's it all about?"

"You're too near," said Mrs. Wigglesworth; "you must stand at this distance if you want the particulars to resolve themselves into their just proportions."

"Huh!" hooted Mr. Wigglesworth, resenting the air of superiority with which his wife delivered this information; "how do you know where I want to stand? Where d'ye get all that purple paint? Must be the expensive kind, you use so much of it."

"It's an impressionist picture," explained Mrs. Wigglesworth with an air; "the colors are laid in broadly, you know."

"I sh'd say they was," sneered Mr. Wigglesworth; "I sh'd think they was laid in for Winter use, with the idea that it was going to be a hard Winter. What d'ye call the thing, anyway? What's that freight engine doing out there all by itself?"

"It is n't a freight engine," answered Mrs. Wigglesworth severely; "it's an old mill. The picture is called 'The Old Mill by Moonlight.' It's a winter scene, you know."

"I know," assented Mr. Wigglesworth, nodding his head with intelligent affability. "I see it is. All that purple paint is the snow, prob'ly."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Wigglesworth, glad to note her husband's interest.

"What makes 'em have purple snow?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth with the affected manner of the true seeker after knowledge. "When I was a boy the snow used to be a deep red, except when the sun got warm, and then it was a dark green."

"Oh, that's the new art," replied Mrs. Wigglesworth; "we — we mass the colors, you understand."

"Oh, yes," said her husband, "I understand.

What's that balloon doing over behind that picket fence?"

"That is n't a balloon," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, a little nettled, "nor a picket fence either; it's the moon rising above a distant range of wooded hills."

"Why, that's so," acknowledged Mr. Wigglesworth, standing on his other foot and shutting up one eye; "I might have known that 'cause it's painted yellow. What's that orphan asylum got to do with it?"

"Ellery Wigglesworth," said his wife sternly, while her face flushed, "you know as well as I do that there is n't any such thing. That's the — the dam."

"Well named, too," muttered Mr. Wigglesworth, grinning effusively.

"You ought to be ashamed," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, sternly, "to make such low remarks right before your own son."

"I did n't say anything," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth. "What did I say?" he continued, appealing to the chandelier.

Mrs. Wigglesworth got out her handkerchief.

"I 'm sure," she said tearfully, "I thought you would be — be glad to see a — a picture of mine — and — and proud."

"Well, I am, ain't I?" said Mr. Wigglesworth; "don't ye hear me trying to find out its good points? How d 'ye s'pose I 'd know what it was, coming on it the first time so, all alone? They did n't have such pictures when I was a boy."

"It 's only a recent thing," chirped Mrs. Wiggles-

worth, regaining her good nature; "you get used to it after a time."

Mr. Wigglesworth had a newspaper rolled into a tube and was peering through it fixedly.

"Is—is that oatmeal?" he slowly inquired after another moment of study.

"Is what?" returned Mrs. Wigglesworth, and then she bit her lips.

"That yellow stuff near what you call the—the dam?" said her husband.

"That's the water," replied Mrs. Wigglesworth; "don't you see it is trickling down over the old wheel, and that it is frozen here and there?"

"Is that a wheel?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth in a cordial tone; "it looks so red I thought it must be a patent farming implement of some kind that had been left outdoors so as to be handy in case of an early Spring. Er—what kind of a wheel did you say it was?" he added, with a kindly interest.

"A mill wheel of course," snapped Mrs. Wigglesworth, going down after her handkerchief again, "what kind of a wheel did you think it would be next to a mill?"

"How d'ye s'pose I knew?" bristled Mr. Wigglesworth, a momentary flash of his old manner taking the place of the light and easy banter which he had assumed; "impossible to say what kind of a wheel Mrs. Wigglesworth would put into her purple art. If that's a mill wheel," he went on, coming back to his role of truth seeking, "and you give me your word of

honor that that yellow stuff is water and not oatmeal, how d'ye come to get the water so much lower in the pond than it is where it flows over the dam? What makes — "

"Ellery Wigglesworth," sobbed his wife, "you — you know this is my first picture, and it ain't — ain't fair to — to criticise it that way. You have to sit back and look at — at these im — impressionist pictures some — sometimes half an hour, and then when you — you look and — and look, it dawns upon you — all of a sudden — and — and the broad colors look — look beautiful — and you can only make fun, when I did it to surprise you, and I think it mean — mean of you, Ellery Wigglesworth to — "

Mr. Wigglesworth flung out of the room.

"That's it; that's the way!" he cried, as he went up stairs to comb his hair; "man works his life out at the office to buy his wife clothes and purple paint and stuff, and when he comes home tired to death, and tries to have a little fun in his family, same as the articles in scrapbooks advise, everybody pitches in and spoils it."

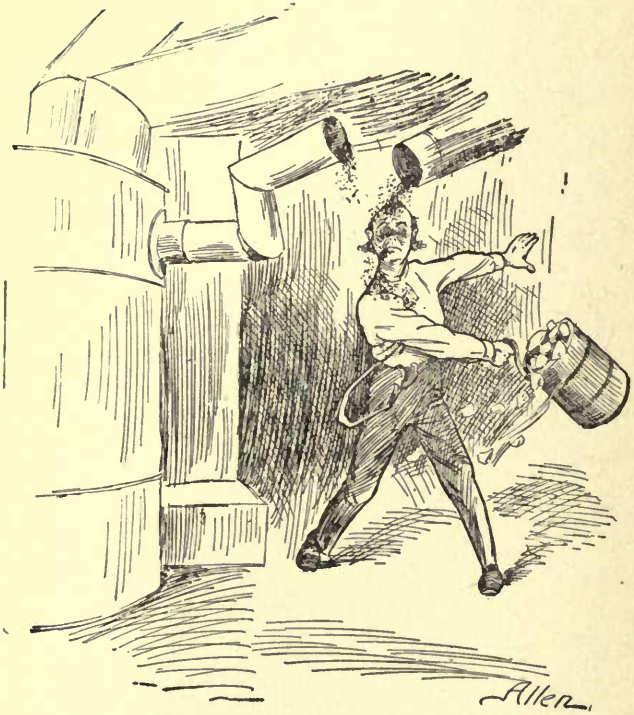
"Great old artist you are, ain't ye?" he called, raising his voice above the noise of the bath-room faucet; "I'll bet a dollar you can't tell a chiar oscuro from a tube of yellow squash. You and Aubrey Beardsley better start a shop together. That's the stuff! Wigglesworth & Beardsley, dealers in all kinds of paint, oil, glass, putty, et cetera. Signs painted on fences and barns during the owner's absence. Call

on Mrs. Wigglesworth when in want of pictures to surprise your husbands with. N. B. Liberal reduction to people furnishing their own paint."

And though Mr. Wigglesworth ran on thus for a considerable period, his voice mounting with the increased fineness of its sarcasm, his wife's sobs were so much louder and more closely connected that he found his efforts wasted.

Chapter XXIII

How Wigglesworth Helped His Wife Receive



"'Want to keep me here grinding this old crank till Christmas, don't ye?'" — *Page 219.*

CHAPTER XXIII.—*How Wigglesworth Helped His Wife Receive*

THE invitations to Mrs. Wigglesworth's afternoon reception had been out a week, the front parlor was becomingly set off with asparagus green and the brightness of autumn leaves, and it looked as if the thing was going to be one of the nicest social events of the season.

"They'll begin coming at four o'clock," Mrs. Wigglesworth said at dinner, "and everything is ready but the ice cream. You'll have to send up a man for that."

"I'd like to know what for?" said Mr. Wigglesworth.

"Why, to freeze it, of course," explained his wife. "It's awfully hard work turning the crank an hour."

"Humph!" grumbled Mr. Wigglesworth, who held a man's opinion concerning an afternoon function; "seems to me you and that hired girl might find time to twist a galvanized iron crank around a few minutes without subjecting me to extra expense. Want to ruin me?"

"Ellery Wigglesworth," returned his wife severely, "do you think I'm going to put on my best dress and freeze ice cream while the first ladies in town are arriving every minute and having to be talked to?"

"B-a-a-h-h!" commented Mr. Wigglesworth; "where

is this freezer! I'll show ye how to coin a dollar."

Down in the cellar Mrs. Wigglesworth had made everything ready. There was the freezer, borrowed of a neighbor, duly filled with six quarts of liquid, and there were ice and salt and other things necessary. Mr. Wigglesworth loaded the salt and ice into the wooden cylinder and gave the crank a few preliminary revolutions.

"Don't see anything the matter with this, do ye?" he asked. "Don't know's you like to have a dollar saved. Rather make folks think ye'd spent a fortune, prob'ly."

Merrily twirled the crank, while Mrs. Wigglesworth crowded in some more pounded ice.

"Regular picnic, this is," said Mr. Wigglesworth, "side of the old churn I used to work when I was a boy. Mother used to keep me at it all the time. Said that one good churn deserves another — he, he, he!"

"What did she mean by that?" Mrs. Wigglesworth innocently asked.

"What did she mean by that?" tartly retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, whose muscles began to feel it; "what does anybody mean by anything? Can't ye understand a joke when it's shown to ye?"

"I don't see any joke in your mother saying that one good churn deserves another," Mrs. Wigglesworth persisted. "If she had one churn I should think that would be nice, but how could it deserve —"

"Y-a-h-h!" said Mr. Wigglesworth, grinding sav-

agely away; "what's the use to try and have any fun with you? You couldn't see a joke if it was pasted on the end of the Lick telescope. Quit jamming in that ice!" he shouted, as the machine went a trifle harder; "want to stop the thing?"

"It ain't me," Mrs. Wigglesworth mildly rejoined; "it's the cream beginning to harden."

"Great lot you know about it!" grumbled her husband, pausing to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

Mrs. Wigglesworth said she must now go and "dress" and with a few encouraging words vanished up the stairs. Mr. Wigglesworth turned on, pausing now and then to mop off his forehead and mutter things to himself.

Every man of a weak and yielding nature who has allowed himself — once — to be bound to the chariot wheels of the ice-cream freezer can recall with ghastly clearness how the lemon-colored mixture on the interior of the tin can, after reaching a certain degree of hardness, appears to be content to remain there. Round and round spun the handle, Mr. Wigglesworth pausing at intervals to gloomily contemplate the growing blisters on the palms of his hands.

Overhead he could hear the shuffling of feet as visitors arrived and went stiffly through the ceremonies of introduction.

"Oh, Ellery," hoarsely wailed Mrs. Wigglesworth, rushing half-way down the stairs, "can't you hurry up? Everybody's coming and it's dreadful to give them only tea, and they looking around and wonder-

ing what the table is for with dishes on it, and no ice-cream!"

"What ye s'pose I care?" returned Mr. Wigglesworth, wanting to yell, but forced to keep his voice under; "think I've got nothing to do but prance around here twisting a blamed old hand organ? You go on back and shake hands with the rest of them rubberneck females, will ye, and let me alone!"

"What is that singular rumbling noise?" asked one of the guests, a little later.

"I — I don't hear anything," faltered Mrs. Wigglesworth, forcing a distorted smile into her face.

"I hear something," said another guest, a thin, little woman with an inquisitive tone. "Hark!"

The roomful of ladies congealed into silence. There was small need of Mrs. Wigglesworth's dissimulation. From beneath their feet, muffled by the carpeted floor, came a strange series of noises, the burr of machinery, it might be, punctuated by a grunting sound as of a railroad engine getting under way, and now and then a thud like a man falling out of a balloon and alighting on the roof of a Presbyterian church.

"Burglars!" lucidly cried a fat woman in a red dress; "they're boring their way in through the cellar wall!" And she stood up in a chair.

Then, just as everybody was turning pale and getting ready to talk all at once, the mixture which for two hours had gone on making Mr. Wigglesworth madder, suddenly went thick, and the dasher, revolving slower, quickly exhausted his remaining strength.

"Gash flummux the old thing!" he yelled, losing all regard for the society event overhead; "what ails it now?" and he twitched the machine savagely across the cellar floor. "Why don't ye twist around here, same's ye been doing since I tackled ye last spring?" he bellowed, and he flung it against the granite wall. "Want to keep me here grinding this old crank till Christmas, don't ye?" and he knocked down one of the furnace pipes with it. "But I want ye to understand," he howled, in a finishing blaze of wrath, as the falling pipe struck his head and emptied a load of soot on him, "that I don't propose to spend my life in this cellar grinding out frozen porridge for a lot of females to spill all over a new spring carpet!"

And grabbing an axe he stove in the freezer's metallic head. To his surprise he found the cream frozen beautifully.

Chapter XXIV

How Wigglesworth Learned to Solder

"At that instant Imogene * * * suddenly opened the door with a snap that was imparted to the vertebrae of Mr. Wigglesworth." — *Page 228.*

CHAPTER XXIV.—*How Wigglesworth Learned to Solder*

"ELLERY," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, as her husband was leaving the table, "I wish you'd take the tea kettle along with you."

Mr. Wigglesworth stayed the tooth-pick halfway to his mouth, and gave utterance to a stare.

"What would I be taking a tea kettle along with me for?" he asked coldly. "Think I'm going to have a five o'clock slander meeting at the office? Reckon I'm a female sewing circle, don't ye?"

"I mean," explained his wife, "that you take it to the tin shop and have the handle mended. It's so loose that Imogene scalds her hand every time she touches it."

"Well," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, "she had n't ought to touch her hand if that's the way it acts."

Winking humorously at himself in the glass Mr. Wigglesworth set out for the office. Mrs. Wigglesworth sighed, as women will. Also she wondered how many times more she would have to mention the kettle before her husband would get mad enough to take it along with him.

Women who have husbands of their own can join Mrs. Wigglesworth in this speculation.

"There!" said Mr. Wigglesworth, with an air of importance on coming home to dinner, "there's some-

thing that'll save us hundreds of dollars in the course of a year," and he laid a long, narrow pasteboard box on the table.

"It's a soldering outfit," he explained, taking off the cover. "Here's the iron and the solder and the rosum, and the whole business."

Mrs. Wiggleswooth clapped her hands.

"O-o-o-o-h-h!" she screamed in a lengthened note of admiration, "won't that be ever so nice! And you can mend the tea kettle, can't you, Ellery?"

"Of course I can," returned Mr. Wigglesworth in a comprehensive manner. "What ye s'pose I got it for — to raise bread with? Think I'm going to set hens with it, don't ye?"

"I'm sure it will be ever so splendid," assented his wife as she served the gravy.

"Only cost a dollar," pursued Mr. Wigglesworth, "and there's solder enough there to mend a cartload of things. I'll bet I'll save nine or ten dollars in mending this year. These tin knockers tuck the charges right to a fellow when they get a chance."

"Of course they do," chimed in Mrs. Wigglesworth. "The only way to be economical is to save in these directions. I remember that Uncle Horace, who had such long whiskers — you remember, Ellery — used to say that he had probably saved over two thousand dollars in his lifetime by not shaving."

"H'm!" answered Mr. Wigglesworth, who wasn't interested in having his wife's relatives brought into his household economics, "seeing as he never had a

cent while he lived, and then died poor, I don't see as that cuts any ice."

"It's the principle of the thing that I look at," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, shaking her head.

"Great lots you know about it," girded her husband. "They'll be hearing of you in Washington next, and telegraphing you to come on and superintend a bond issue. Where's this kettle you've been making such a fuss about? Why don't ye have it out here if you want it mended?"

Sailing into the kitchen in his impulsive manner Mr. Wigglesworth saw the kettle on the stove and caught it up quickly — in fact before his wife's word of caution could avail. It was a round, fat kettle, with a saucy little nose, and the loose handle previously indicated, which, as it felt Mr. Wigglesworth's hasty grasp, gave vent to a low, sputtering laugh, and slipped out of its fastening. A hot spurt of water instantly unloaded upon Mr. Wigglesworth's knees.

"Wow!" yelled that gentleman, grabbing himself by the legs and limping about the kitchen; "I'm scalt — my leg's burnt to a crisp! What fool left that boiling water with such a handle as that on it?"

"It's the way it has been for several weeks," exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "Imogene has been burned twenty times."

"What ye s'pose I care for your Imogenes?" snorted Mr. Wigglesworth. "I'll bet five dollars she left it there on purpose to scald me."

Several minutes of limping and growling sufficed to bring him back to the business in hand. The kettle was emptied, and then taken to the sink, and Mrs. Wigglesworth bidden to steady it.

"It — it's awfully hot," she said, touching the kettle gingerly with her hands.

"Poh!" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, "what if it is? Can't ye stand a little thing like that for the sake of saving a few dollars?"

Mr. Wigglesworth read the directions over carefully and rolled up his sleeves. Having previously removed his shoes and put on dry stockings, he felt himself, in his stocking feet, to be in particularly good working order.

"This is something like it," he said, flourishing the soldering iron. He owned to a passing feeling of regret that all the tin dishes in the house weren't in need of repairs.

First he sprinkled some rosin over the severed ends of the tea kettle's handle.

"What 's that?" asked Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Rosum," curtly replied her husband; "wha' d'ye think it was — fig paste? Thought it was vanilla soup, didn't ye?"

"What is it for?" pursued Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"What is it for?" repeated Mr. Wigglesworth, thrusting the iron into the cook-stove fire, "wha' d'ye s'pose?"

"I didn't know," answered his wife meekly.

"Well, who said ye did?" retorted Mr. Wiggles-

worth smartly, and there Mrs. Wigglesworth's first lesson in chemistry ended.

Forth from the fire came the iron, red hot. Holding the bar of solder in one hand, Mr. Wigglesworth applied the iron to it, and presently bright drops of the melted mettle poured down upon the kettle. Some of them striking the handle jarred off the rosin and then sprang merrily for the back of Mrs. Wigglesworth's hand.

"Oh! oh! oh!" screamed that lady, promptly releasing the kettle and thrusting her hand into her mouth.

"Wha' d'ye want to do that for?" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth in a burst of anger.

"I — I did n't do anything," sniffed his wife.

"Yes, ye did, too," growled Mr. Wigglesworth. "You went and let go your hold and jerked the handle apart. How d'ye suppose I can mend a thing in that way?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth steadfastly refusing to lend another hand, and Imogene having long since sought refuge on the back stairs, Mr. Wigglesworth with a muttered remark took the kettle in his lap, adjusted the erring handle, applied his rosin and brought the heated iron once more into contact with the solder.

It was a moment of intense interest. From the pantry door Mrs. Wigglesworth, hand in mouth, looked on in a species of fascination.

Above the smoking iron bent the inflamed countenance of Mr. Wigglesworth, his eyes bulging out

and his breathing labored. All other sounds were stilled and the clock on the wall ticked ominously.

Then the mass of solder, held with painful carefulness, reached its melting point. At that instant Imogene, from her retreat on the back stairs, fancying by the stillness that the coast was clear, suddenly opened the door with a snap that was imparted to the vertebrae of Mr. Wigglesworth. In a flash the liquid metal slipped out of his grasp and with the instinct of gravitation dropped upon Mr. Wigglesworth's stockings.

Hired girls may come and hired girls may go, and the last one, quite down to the end of time, will be able to point out to visitors the dent in the ceiling which, it is alleged, was made by the head of Mr. Wigglesworth when, with a blood-stopping shriek, he vaulted from his chair.

"You're a daisy, ain't ye?" he yelled some time later as he sat with his feet in the bathtub while Mrs. Wigglesworth prowled around in the attic for some cotton batting; "the next time you want any economizing done, you better send for Uncle Horace and let him take his flowing whiskers and do it." And he ran on for nearly an hour in this fashion.

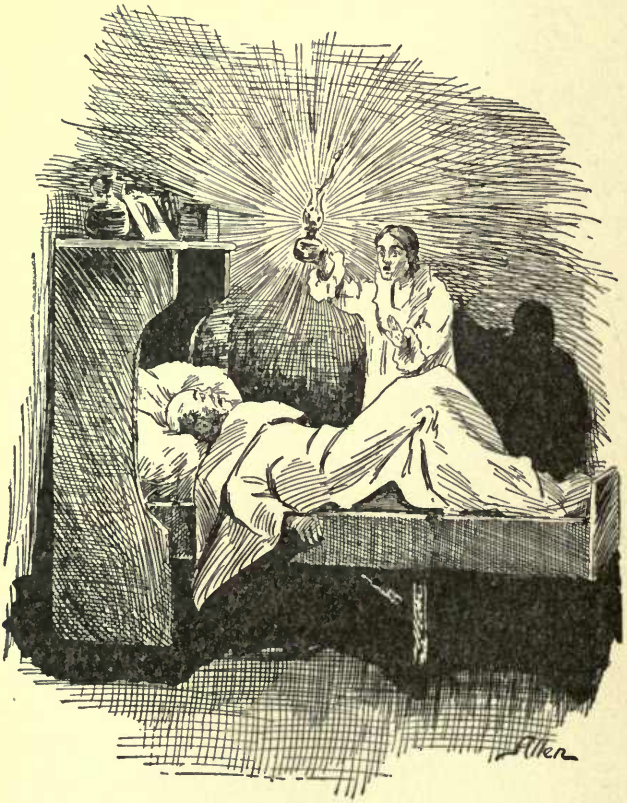
Next day Imogene took the kettle to the tinman and waited while he soldered on the handle. The bill was ten cents.

"But you needn't say anything to Mr. Wigglesworth about it," said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

Imogene shook her head.

Chapter XXV

How Wigglesworth Endured Sickness



"'Going to let me perish here in the dark?' he snapped: 'where's that fat-headed doctor?'"—*Page 236.*

CHAPTER XXV. — *How Wigglesworth Endured Sickness*

WHEN Mr. Wigglesworth came home to dinner he found his wife on the lounge with a blanket spread over her and her head enveloped in a shawl. There was a large bowl of homemade medicine on a chair by her side and an expression of misery upon her face that cast a gloom over the whole lower part of the house.

"What ails ye now?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth in the sympathetic tone that a man assumes toward his wife whose sickness he looks upon as an infringement of his own prerogatives.

"I — I think I've got the grip," Mrs. Wigglesworth answered faintly. "It's been coming on all the morning, and I just had to lie down. I've got the awfullest pain in my back and my head aches fit to split.

"Pooh!" said Mr. Wigglesworth; "that 's just like a woman. Least little thing she thinks she's dying!"

"I guess you would n't enjoy it," sighed his wife, "if you ached all over as I do."

"Would n't like it? Well, probably I would n't," Mr. Wigglesworth retorted loftily, "but I don't think I'd run all over town bawling about it. What's the use of being a grown-up woman if you can't stand a little pain? 'Taint for long anyway, and the only thing to do is to brace up and bear it like a man?"

With the enunciation of which beautiful philosophy Mr. Wigglesworth sat down to dinner while his wife clung to the lounge and sipped the villainous home-made concoction out of the bowl.

"I wish you'd step into the doctor's," she said feebly, as her husband, after telling her to "take care of herself," was starting for the office; "I ought to have him at once, before this thing gets a start."

"That's it!" grumbled Mr. Wigglesworth; "first little kink in the neck, run for the doctor! When I was a boy mother used to doctor the whole family of us a year on a few cents' worth of herbs. What's the use to call in an old muttonhead of a doctor and pay him two dollars for pulling your tongue out on your chin and peering into it and looking wise? What you want to do is to lay there and take a good sweat and you'll be all right, I'll bet a cookie."

Whether Mr. Wigglesworth's prescription was the thing required, or his wife was less ill than she had believed herself to be, it was a fact that when he came home to supper Mrs. Wigglesworth was moving about the house, rather tottery in the knees, but still on deck and ready for action.

"What'd I tell you?" her husband triumphantly cried. "All that these little attacks need is some will power and — *woof!* they're gone. That's what mother always used to say, and she knew more about doctoring than the man that got it up."

Out of deference to his wife's illness Mr. Wigglesworth magnanimously occupied the spare bedroom, so

that she might "have a good night's rest," he said. So also could he, although he didn't mention this fact.

Night trailed her sable wings over the city, and even reached for a considerable distance out into the suburbs. The stars, marshalled in glittering array, shone frostily in the heavens and winked at the wickedness which for so many centuries, even as tonight, they had looked down upon. Wrapped in peaceful slumber the honest folk of the town waited the coming of another day with its cark and care, and the recurrence of unsettled accounts. Peace was within the borders, and even rested upon the walls of Wigglesworth as the midnight bell sent its slow clangor quivering into the air. Mrs. Wigglesworth at that instant was dreaming — dreaming that Imogene had fallen out of the window and landed two miles below upon a marble floor. Never she said to the neighbors afterwards, had she heard such dreadful groans emanate from any hired girl — and then she became slowly conscious that the groans were in the next room, and that Mr. Wigglesworth was the author and projector thereof. In another moment she was out by his bedside.

"Dearest Ellery!" she said, "what is the matter?"

"O-o-o-h-h-h!" moaned Mr. Wigglesworth in a sepulchral tone, of tremulo quality; "I'm dying — I'm dying!" and he shivered alarmingly.

"Tell me what it is," cried his wife, dropping by the bedside. "Oh, my darling Ellery, do not go on

like that — your groans are frightful. Tell your own wifey what it is!"

"Emma" — Mr. Wigglesworth faintly began.

"Yes — yes, darling," his wife answered, "I'm here — close by your side — what is it I can do?"

"Emma," Mr. Wigglesworth repeated, solemnly, "I am in a dreadful condition — suffering terrible."

"Oh, I know it, I know it," wailed his wife. "Tell me what it is, so I can do something for you."

"I don't believe there is anything can be done," Mr. Wigglesworth said, in a hollow voice; "I've felt this coming on for a long time."

"And never told me?" sobbed his wife.

"Hush!" Mr. Wigglesworth said, fetching another groan that rattled the water pitcher; "I've got shooting pains through me, and my legs are all broke out in cold perspiration. The sheets are all wet with it. Feel of my hand."

Mrs. Wigglesworth caught it up. It seemed much like any hand, so far as she could distinguish in the dark.

"Don't it feel hot?" her husband groaned.

"It — it does seem to be that way," Mrs. Wigglesworth assented.

"Seem to be!" sniffed Mr. Wigglesworth, with a touch of his old manner; "it's fairly sizzling!"

"I see it is now," his wife hastened to add.

"But oh, this back — this back!" moaned Mr. Wigglesworth.

Mrs. Wigglesworth sprang to her feet.

"Something must be done at once!" she exclaimed, and tottering to the bureau, she broke the lamp chimney.

"That's the way!" cried Mr. Wigglesworth, interrupting one of the groans; "get the chimney where I can put my bare feet on it when I get up to die in a chair!"

Mrs. Wigglesworth hastily brought the lamp from her own room, and its cheerful rays served to dispel much of the gloom from the sick apartment. Her husband's face was knotted with agony. His feverish tossing had disarranged the long hair that by day he wore carefully combed from his left ear up over the top of his head, and his bald top gleamed forth bravely. With the coming of the light his spirits rose perceptibly.

"Going to do anything tonight?" he said, with a show of asperity. "Going to let me lie here and perish, I s'pose, seeing's my life insurance has n't run out."

"But what shall I do?" Mrs. Wigglesworth said, with a little helpless wringing of her hands.

"Do!" exclaimed her husband, letting his sarcastic side flicker above the solemnity of the occasion; "why not send my symptoms to the British Medical Journal and get an answer to correspondents? How would it do to forward a lock of my hair to Mme. Ruppert, and have a diagnosis of the case, with a horoscope for the future and directions how to break up a setting hen? Go look in the rear end of your

scrap-book, can't ye, and find out something that ain't so? What's the use ——"

Mr. Wigglesworth was running on in this fashion to usual length, when a recollection of his pains smote him, and he sank back with a groan, before whose awfulness his preceding groans were quite lost sight of. Mrs. Wigglesworth sobbed aloud.

"Sha'n't I make a mustard plaster and put it on your back?" she cried.

"Anything, anything!" moaned Mr. Wigglesworth, and his wife tottered down into the kitchen, arousing Imogene on the way, and with what speed they were capable of they built a fire and had water boiling, while ever the curdling moans of the suffering Wigglesworth found their way along the back hall and corkscrewed down the kitchen stairs, freezing their feminine blood and stimulating them to redoubled action.

When Mrs. Wigglesworth came back into the room with the plaster held out straight before her and giving forth a pungent odor, Mr. Wigglesworth was thrashing to and fro and growling loudly.

"Going to let me perish here in the dark?" he snapped; "where's that fat-headed doctor?"

"I — I didn't send for the doctor," his wife stammered; "did you want one?"

"Oh, of course not!" spluttered Mr. Wigglesworth, looking up at the ceiling; "no need of a doctor for me! What's the good of having a doctor for old Wigglesworth? Let him die — that's the best way — let him R. I. P., and we'll have the insurance; that's

what we 'll have. Think you 're going to have a warm time, don't ye, waltzing round on a widder's dower? S'pose ye think — what ye got there?"

"It 's the mustard plaster," Mrs. Wigglesworth explained. She 'd been holding it straight in front of her for five minutes.

"What ye going to do with it?" her husband asked suspiciously, drawing down under the bedclothes.

"If you — you will let me put it on your back," Mrs. Wigglesworth pleaded, "it will draw out the pain."

"Wow!"

This was a yell, so shrill, so loud, that Mrs. Wigglesworth, in alarm, dropped the mustard plaster to the floor. Mr. Wigglesworth, in drawing under the coverlid, as his wife approached the bed, had lashed out with both feet, and the yell was his.

"There's something in the bed!" he howled; "there's a blamed old dead cat in the bed, and I've mashed my feet on her! The blood's running all over everything!"

With another shriek Mr. Wigglesworth was out on the floor, one foot in the middle of the mustard plaster. Giving vent to a special yell on this account, he vaulted into the hall, wearing the plaster with him. Imogene, who had stolen near the door for the purpose of hearing Mr. Wigglesworth's remarks with more clearness, saw him coming, and fetching a whoop she scuttled for the back stairs, down which she fell in two distinct bumps, dove under the refrigerator and stayed there.

Mrs. Wigglesworth's first inclination was to faint, but in the bustle and confusion of going to press she neglected to do so. Instead she turned her attention to the bed and there she found the rubber water bottle. Mrs. Wigglesworth remembered that the day before she had put it in the bed, expecting a guest who did not come, and where it had been forgotten. During the night, her husband, in his sleep, had somehow unloosed the stopper, and the water had leaked out of it.

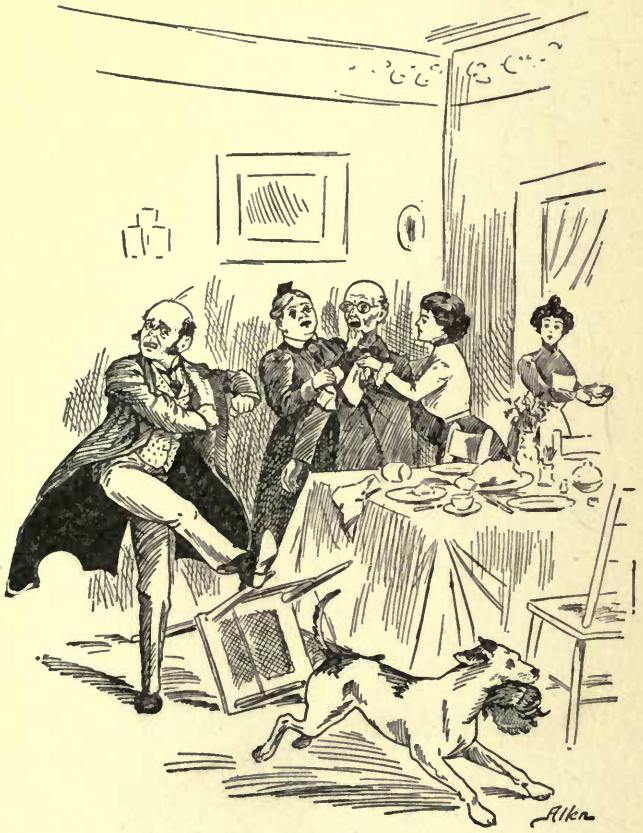
"Oh, Ellery!" she joyfully cried, as she saw what the trouble was.

"Don't Ellery me!" snarled Mr. Wigglesworth, coming out of the bathroom and vengefully slapping the remains of the mustard plaster against the wall; "you think it mighty smart, every time I have a little ache or pain, to come snuffing round and trying to make out I'm sick, so you can work off some of your blamed old fool receipts on me, but I want you to understand that I don't propose to act as no lay figure for you to start your old emergency hospitals with, and the sooner you find it out the quicker it will be for you!"

And Mrs. Wigglesworth explained to the neighbors who came in to lift the refrigerator off Imogene, that really she never had known a mustard plaster to work more efficaciously.

Chapter XXVI

How Wigglesworth Kept Thanksgiving Day



"'And then he grabbed it in his teeth Roscoe, did you understand?'" — *Page 245.*

CHAPTER XXVI.—*How Wigglesworth Kept Thanksgiving Day*

"THERE they are," cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, who for the past hour had been peering anxiously through the window. The front door bothered somewhat in opening, so by the time she had got down the walk, Aunt and Uncle Chesterfield were unloaded from the North Jayville stage and striving, with the somewhat emphatic help of the driver, to get their large bundles through the gateway.

"So glad to see you!" Mrs. Wigglesworth said, as they bustled up the steps. "Oh, whose dog is that?"

"Drat him!" piped Uncle Chesterfield, dropping two or three bundles as the dog collided with his legs — Uncle Chesterfield's legs, "it's that ornery cur of Reuben's. I told 'em to tie him up, but I declare ef he ain't follered us plumb inter town!"

It was a tall dog of a weak drab shade and legs that sprawled and shambled more than seemed necessary. He plunged into the vestibule and, backing into a corner, hung several inches of crimson tongue out on his chin and scuffed an aimless tail back and forth with much rapidity. Just then Mr. Wigglesworth opened the door, and the dog shot into the house, flinging that startled gentleman violently into the parlor portieres.

"Get out!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, clawing the

portieres violently from about his neck. "Take that dog out of the house — whose is it — what ye doing?"

"It's Uncle Chesterfield's dog," explained Mrs. Wigglesworth, coming to her husband's aid, while the guests stood in the door, shedding bundles.

"I don't care if it is!" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, finding his way out of the clinging curtains; "you need'nt set him on to me!"

This was not a very auspicious reception for the relatives who had taken the long and bumpy stage drive for the purpose of spending Thanksgiving Day in the city, but Mr. Wigglesworth finally gulped down his wrath and helped his wife relieve the guests of their wraps and the things they had brought along tied up in back numbers of the local paper.

The tall dog was taken in hand by Imogene and, after a struggle, shut up in the shed. He was a quite strong dog named Roscoe. He was named, so Aunt Emmeline said, for a nephew who formerly visited the Black Hills during a mining excitement, and subsequently fell down a shaft, dashing in the top of his head as he did so.

"Now, you make yourselves right at home," bustled Mrs. Wigglesworth with great cordiality, "because I shall be busy helping Imogene in the kitchen. Ellery, you see that Aunt and Uncle don't get lonesome, and I'll have dinner just as soon as it is ready."

So she vanished from the room, while Mr. Wigglesworth put his hands in his pockets and assumed the gloomy expression that the city man acquires when his wife's rural relatives are left to his protection.

"How's polertics down this way?" shrilled Uncle Chesterfield.

He was a little, dried man with a wrinkled face and not any teeth to speak of. He wore a long black coat with only one button, and that caught into the wrong buttonhole, giving the collar a rakish appearance, and he sat straight up in the only uncomfortable chair in the room and could be persuaded to use no other. Moreover, he steadily refused to take off his rubbers.

"They ain't no two ways about this silver question," he pursued, shaking his head, while Mr. Wigglesworth shifted uneasily on the sofa; "ef Conguss don't take things in hand and give us free silver, you kin reckon on one thing, shore."

Uncle Chesterfield was imbued with a perfectly ferocious array of statistics, and these with infinite oraculousness he now delivered himself of, while Aunt Emmeline maintained a steady knitting and Mr. Wigglesworth glowered savagely at an engraving depicting Daniel Webster in the enviable condition of a dying bed.

"What ye doing, anyway?" he exclaimed, bursting into the kitchen some time later; "ain't ye going to have this dinner today, and be done with it?"

"Oh, don't bother me, I beg of you, Ellery," implored Mrs. Wigglesworth, red with heat and hurry.

"Bother you!" sniffed Mr. Wigglesworth scornfully, "what's bothering you? Think I'm going to stay in there all the week watching that old fossil work his chin whiskers up and down the scenery?

Think I 'm a candidate, don't ye, and can stand anything?"

When they got down to the table, which feat was eventually accomplished, Mr. Wigglesworth was far from being in a hilarious condition.

"What ails this knife?" he growled, making a pass at the turkey with it.

"Don't slop it on the tablecloth," observed his wife.

The man has yet to be born who can have this thing said to him by a woman and preserve a calm exterior, and yet women go on saying it as often as men stand up to carve. Mr. Wigglesworth paused long enough to freeze his wife with a look, and then lunged once more at the dark-brown bird before him.

"Who picked out this rubber one?" he puffed, jabbing viciously with the fork; "must have bought it yourself with the aid of a book. Hints on How to get Up a Game Dinner, by Mrs. Wigglesworth."

With such vocal accompaniment, Mr. Wigglesworth succeeded in detaching a variety of fragments from the turkey, while the guests protected themselves as well as possible with their napkins. The meal progressed in silence, for it had been a long ride and Uncle Chesterfield was nearly empty.

Then Imogene brought in the pudding. It was a pudding into which the very heart of Mrs. Wigglesworth had been knit, and the face of that worthy lady glowed with anxious pride.

"Now the sauce, Imogene," she commanded.

It was a sweet and savory sauce of starchy color,

and it had stood on the stove all through the protracted dinner. Imogene sailed into the room with the bowl carefully balanced in her hand. It was claimed afterward that she perfectly well knew that Roscoe had slipped through the kitchen door and was hidden behind the stove, but if this is true she had momentarily forgotten it, until on the instant when that nervous animal sighted Uncle Chesterfield at the table, with a shiny face beaming above his napkin.

Giving utterance to a glad cry of recognition, Roscoe vaulted into the apartment at the very instant of Imogene's arrival with the sauce. In a flash Imogene was in the air and the fiery sauce had emptied itself over Uncle Chesterfield.

People on their way to the football game heard the yell that burst from the throat of Uncle Chesterfield, and quickened their pace, thinking the game must be in progress, and fearful from the noise that they must be losing the very best part of it.

"But, oh, dear," complained Mrs. Wigglesworth in rehearsing the scene next day to the minister's wife, "you never saw anything so dreadful as dear old Uncle was, with the sauce running down his brown hair, which isn't his own, you know, but a wig that he's worn since he was a young man, and of course, outgrown, and it ran all down his collar — I mean the sauce — and then Roscoe jumped on his neck — I mean Uncle Chesterfield's neck — and it came off — I mean the wig did — and then he grabbed it in his teeth — Roscoe did, you understand, for of course

Uncle Chesterfield hasn't any, being so old, and he ran all over the house, with Ellery kicking him — kicking Roscoe I mean — and Uncle Chesterfield just standing there in the floor, yelling and looking bald, and me and Aunt Emmeline wiping the sauce off him with our napkins!"

And Mrs. Wigglesworth shuddered at the recollection.

Chapter XXVII

How Wigglesworth Shoveled Off

"Petrified, the minister stood on the walk." — *Page 253.*

CHAPTER XXVII.—*How Wigglesworth Shovelled Off*

THE heavy fall of snow at night was followed by a thaw next morning, so that when Mr. Wigglesworth came home at noon he found his wife in a flutter.

"Oh, dear me!" wailed that lady on the instant of her husband's appearance.

Husbands love to be greeted thus on coming home to dinner. It appears to give their appetite an added zest.

"What's the matter now?" said Mr. Wigglesworth, coldly, as he plucked off his coat.

"Matter enough," replied his wife, severely, "with that kitchen roof leaking again and ruining the plastering. You promised to send up a man to have it fixed."

"Oh, of course," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, as he washed his hands with angry emphasis, "lay it onto me. Think I've nothing better to do than to go prancing round after carpenters with warts on their hands?"

"There's oceans of snow up there still," complained Mrs. Wigglesworth, "and it will be awful to have it all run down through the plastering."

"Well, why don't you clean it off, then," said Mr. Wigglesworth, testily.

"Ellery Wigglesworth," said his wife, sternly, "do

you think I 'm going to take a shovel at my time of life and clean off a kitchen roof?"

"Pooh!" sniffed Mr. Wigglesworth, looking redly out of the towel, "What's that to do? Ain't it worth while to save a little money when there 's a chance?"

Shortly afterwards the woman next door observed the form of Mr. Wigglesworth laboredly lowering itself from a chamber window down to the sloping and snow encumbered roof of the kitchen addition. The woman next door was without a hired girl, and the dinner dishes were cooling in the washpan, but clearly her duty lay at the window, and there she remained, her eyes fastened upon the roof of the Wigglesworth kitchen.

Mr. Wigglesworth, after a number of painful motions with his legs got his feet fixed on the roof, with his hands still clinging to the ledge of the chamber window.

"Why don't you hand out that shovel?" he cried in a hoarse voice; "think I want to stand out here all day, looking like a gash-flummuxed old flying machine?"

Then the head of Mrs. Wigglesworth appeared at the window.

"Shall I reach it down to you?" she asked in a soothing tone.

"Reach it down to me?" howled Mr. Wigglesworth as one of his feet slipped ominously and he clutched anew at the ledge, "wha'd ye s'pose you're going to do, send it by express, C. O. D.? Reckon you're

going to die and leave it to me in your will, don't ye?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth hastily thrust the shovel through the window, with such speed indeed, not being certain of the distance, as to catch her husband smartly on the top of his head just as he was about opening his mouth for a fresh remark, whereat his mouth went shut again instantly.

Mr. Wigglesworth's tongue lay between his teeth at that very moment.

"Suffering Columbus!" he yelled, when he could get his tongue loose from the teeth again, "what ye do that for?"

"I did n't mean to hit you," pleaded his wife.

"Yes, ye did too!" returned Mr. Wigglesworth savagely, and he thought, with bitterness in his heart, how inscrutable were the ways of Providence that should send the tears from his eye pouring down the lachrymal glands into his nose at the very moment when he had n't a hand to spare for his handkerchief.

Clinging to the window ledge with one arm, Mr. Wigglesworth made shift to work the shovel into his other hand, and to poke it feebly against the heavy snow.

"This is the dam —"

"Ellery Wigglesworth!" cried his horror-stricken wife.

"— pest snow I ever saw," snarled Mr. Wigglesworth, unheeding his wife's interruption. But with superhuman energy he succeeded in dislodging a quantity, which disappeared over the edge of the roof.

"Oh!" screamed a female voice as the snow went out of sight.

It was a somewhat smothered voice. It belonged to a very tall, thin lady, who had called at the kitchen door with a large subscription book, containing one thousand recipes and hints for making women beautiful, every one of which the tall lady had apparently disregarded from her youth up — which was a long distance. She had arrived at the back stoop simultaneously with the advent of Mr. Wigglesworth's wad of snow.

"You are a wretch!" shrieked the tall woman, waltzing out into the yard and shaking the subscription book at Mr. Wigglesworth. Her bonnet was smashed down over one eye, imparting to the tall woman a rakish appearance totally at variance with the suggestions of her book, which could be had in cloth, or in half morocco at double the cost.

"Get out! You old fool!" roared Mr. Wigglesworth, his arm nearly strained out of its socket.

"I ain't an old fool," shrieked the tall woman, clawing at the snow down her neck; "I'm just as respectable a lady as you are, and I'll have the police here in two minutes!"

So she rushed out of the yard and up the street, and she hasn't been back yet, whence it is probable she was unable to find the police.

Mr. Wigglesworth toiled on. The increasing weight of the shovel, the difficulty of securing with one hand the proper leverage, the strain upon his other arm, the

slipping tendencies of his feet, the constant sniffings of his nose, the eyes standing out with the veins upon his forehead — these are things that the poet laureate might make clear, but before which the ordinary pen must falter.

Not to say anything about the maddening suggestions from Mrs. Wigglesworth, who, with an apron on her head, leaned that member out of the window and said things that he'll never forget.

At that juncture the minister came up the slippery walk, stepping carefully and bearing in his hands a bowl of delicious tomato soup.

"Hurry over with it," his wife had said, "for Mr. Wigglesworth loves my tomato soup dearly."

It was at the very moment when Mr. Wigglesworth's extraordinary efforts with the shovel appeared likely to meet with some reward. Already the mass of snow was loosening, and then Mrs. Wigglesworth's quick eye discerned the minister turning the corner of the house, the steaming bowl balanced gingerly in front of him. She shrieked, threw up her head, knocking out the support to the window which, crashing down upon the hand of Mr. Wigglesworth, tore from that startled gentleman a shriek of more than mortal agony, and the next moment, prone in the mass of snow, he was alpining down the kitchen roof, his legs spread very wide apart and his hands clutching the wooden shovel.

Petrified, the minister stood on the walk, his face upraised in a look of horrified inquiry and his hands

holding aloft the bowl of tomato soup, as if it might be a propitiatory oblation offered for the gods.

"It was awful," shuddered the woman next door, in explaining it a few hours later to the local reporter, "to see that good man standing there, a man of upright character, and then have Mr. Wigglesworth, brandishing that snow shovel, descend with an avalanche of snow and render him quite otherwise."

"I think you said the soup was hot?" the reporter suggested, as he made an entry in his notebook.

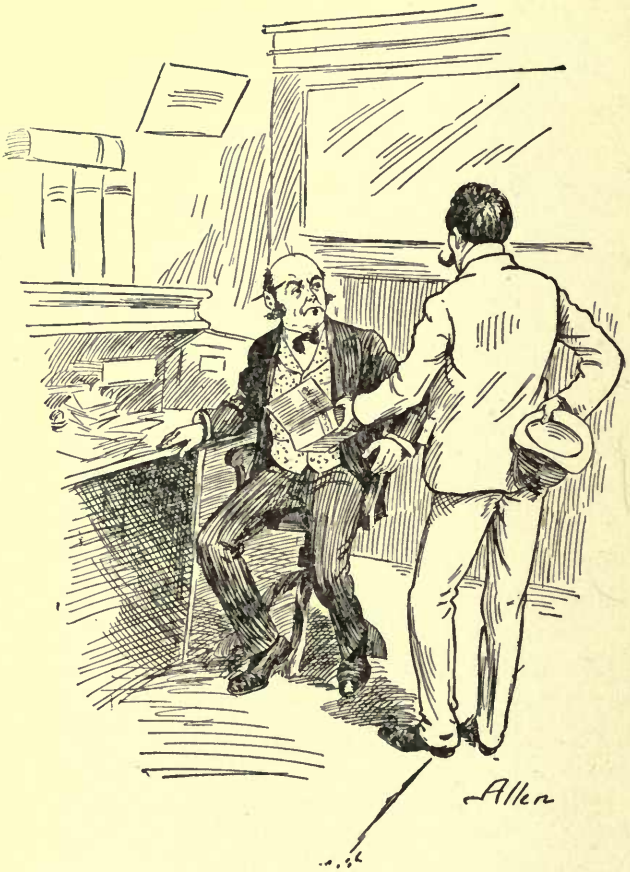
The woman next door opened the window a little way.

"Listen!" she said, sententiously.

And even at that distance the muffled sounds of Mr. Wigglesworth were distinctly audible.

Chapter XXVIII

How Wigglesworth Oiled the Hinges



"But he was bothered at the office all through the afternoon."—*Page 257.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.—*How Wigglesworth Oiled the Hinges*

"NOW remember," charged Mrs. Wigglesworth, as her husband was starting for the office, "that the minister and his wife take tea with us, and don't forget to come home early, will you?"

"Come home early?" returned Mr. Wigglesworth; "what ye take me for? Don't ye s'pose I know when to come home? Think I'm a hired girl at a dance, don't ye?"

But he was bothered at the office all through the afternoon, and got pinned in his chair at the last moment by a tall, dark man in a foreign-looking moustache, who stole past the boy, and just when Mr. Wigglesworth thought it must be a new customer, pulled a box of cigars from under his coat and proceeded to explain in a hoarse, mysterious whisper, that, being smuggled, they were extraordinarily cheap at that price, provided you held them firmly about the waist while smoking, to prevent their insides falling out.

Half way home he thought of the guests, and he broke into the front hall, his face hot and red with haste.

"'Sh!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, rushing out of the dining-room. "They're in the parlor. Oh, Ellery, what made you so late, and it just seems as if

the oven never would bake those biscuits, and do, for mercy's sake, hurry up and wash, and don't forget clean cuffs, and why didn't you hurry?"

"Hurry!" choked Mr. Wigglesworth, pulling his coat off as he rushed upstairs; "think I'm a plumber? Reckon a man's got nothing to do but run his legs into an apoplexy to eat suppers with ministers?"

Fifteen minutes later he entered the parlor and greeted the guests. His clothing was a good deal agitated, and in his haste he'd forgotton to put on a necktie.

"It rejoices my heart, Brother Wigglesworth," beamed the minister, "to engage in these interchanges of social pleasures. How delightful it is," he added, putting in a gesture, "to greet one another in our homes, and there, in the relaxation that proceeds from — from — er — relaxation, to soften the — the asperities of — of — er — er —"

"Existence," suggested his wife.

"Precisely," said the minister, "of our existence. Exactly."

"Oh, Ellery," called Mrs. Wigglesworth, putting a troubled face in at the door, "will you please step here a moment?"

Mr. Wigglesworth followed her to the dining-room.

"What ails ye now?" he asked. "Why don't ye have supper if you're going to? S'pose I want to stay in there all night with that automatic phonograph?"

"Everything's ready," said Mrs. Wigglesworth,

waving her hand towards the table, "and I want you to oil this door, so when Imogene comes in with the tea it won't squeak so awfully. It's been driving me wild for a month."

Mr. Wigglesworth knew this; also that his wife had talked about it ceaselessly at every meal.

"Where's your oil can?" he said testily. "You women folks always call on a man to do these things at just the worst times. You save 'em up."

"I would n't lift it off the hinges," Mrs. Wigglesworth advised, as her husband with his accustomed energy grabbed hold of the door.

"Course you would n't!" he grunted, "you 'd have a new way of your own. Side talks with girls on how to oil doors, by Mrs. Wigglesworth. Written exclusively for the Ladies' Home Ledger."

Lifting the door from its hinges and leaning it against the wall, Mr. Wigglesworth anointed the hinges copiously.

"That's the way to do a job like that," he said, importantly. "Don't take a minute, and you get at the whole thing."

Then he picked up the door. It was one of the heaviest doors on Douglass Avenue, and the veins on Mr. Wigglesworth's forehead stood out a little as he raised it up and slid it into place.

"There you are!" he cried triumphantly, wiping his brow.

"But the bottom hinge is n't on," suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"What's the reason it ain't" retorted her husband.

Grasping the door — it was a wide door also — he raised it again. This time the bottom hinge slipped on, but the upper one failed to connect.

"Why don't ye take hold here and help me out a little?" snapped Mr. Wigglesworth. "Think I can hold a ninety-pound door out at arm's length all winter?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth promptly lent assistance, pulling the door quite loose and pushing it over on her husband.

"What ye doing?" he cried, tottering forward and back under its awkward weight. "Why don't ye do 's I tell ye? When I hold her up you take and guide the hinges and they 'll slip on like a whistle."

Once more he brought his benumbed arms into service and hoisted the door aloft. Its weight had increased surprisingly. Mrs. Wigglesworth got the upper hinge in position, but when she tackled the lower one the upper slipped off again. This was repeated, with variations, for thirty times.

"Which one of them is the longest?" Mrs. Wigglesworth asked with a sob.

"Both of 'em!" howled Mr. Wigglesworth, enunciating the truth that every man discovers who tries to hang a door. "They're both of 'em six inches longer than the other one," and he strained afresh.

"I am afraid that something is detaining Brother Wigglesworth," remarked the minister, into whose countenance had stolen a look of anxious hunger.

"I can hear a noise in the dining-room," said his wife, who for fifteen minutes had been idly fingering the family album. "Listen!"

Through the still rooms the muffled sounds, growing louder, now took their way, rising and falling and augmenting in volume. The minister's wife grew pale.

"I think we ought to investigate," she said agitatedly; "perhaps somebody has fainted."

When they opened the dining-room door, the other door, the one Mr. Wigglesworth was performing with, had just slipped off again, with an impetus that sent its bearer careering across the floor. Mr. Wigglesworth's collar was torn out, his vest had ripped open, and the sleeves of his coat, worked up to his elbows, disclosed that he had turned his cuffs instead of donning fresh ones. His crimson face, bathed in perspiration, was painfully distorted, his eyes hung out, while between his parched lips a dry tongue rattled.

Catching sight of the pale face of the minister he gave a hoarse laugh.

"Doors hung!" he shrieked, tottering aimlessly forward and making a lunge at the sideboard: "I'm the great international door-hanger. Doors hung in any position to suit customers. Bring your doors to Wigglesworth, the celebrated hangist. Customers in delicate health can have their doors hung at home. All kinds of doors kept on hand" —

And then the door, held aloft in his stiffened arms, engaged with the chandelier and fell with its bearer

upon the daintily spread table. In vain did the ladies utter a warning scream, in vain did the minister, breaking from his stupor, spring to the rescue. Over in one fell ruin went table, door and Wigglesworth, and the tragedy was complete.

Mrs. Wigglesworth said afterward that the most beautiful sight to her was the minister. Thrown to the floor and pinned against the wall, with the table across his knees, a large circular pie, covered with whipped cream to a depth of two inches had slid into that gentleman's lap and mashed itself all over the front of his stomach.

"And yet," she cried admiringly, "he never lost patience once, but just sat there with a smile on his face like what you see in pictures."

Chapter XXIX

How Wigglesworth Got Ready for Christmas

"'Why, Ellery,' she called, 'What have you got there?'"
— *Page 267.*

CHAPTER XXIX.— *How Wiggleworth Got Ready For Christmas*

MRS. WIGGLESWORTH pursed up her lips.

"I want," she said, nodding her head thoughtfully, "to observe Christmas in the old-fashioned way this year."

"Umph!" returned Mr. Wigglesworth, rattling his paper, "that means you want to run me in debt for more fool things than usual, I s 'pose."

"No, Ellery," said Mrs. Wigglesworth in a tone of mild reproof. "I mean to be economical in my expenditures. What I want to do is to revive some of the customs of our childhood — you know, Ellery, a skating party and a turkey dinner and then a tree in the evening loaded with presents."

"There ye go!" cried Mr. Wigglesworth; "how ye going to load a tree with presents unless you spend a cartload of my money buying 'em?"

"Oh, we'll have our friends in, you know," explained Mrs. Wigglesworth, her imagination kindling; "the Wetherbees, the minister and his wife, and two or three more. It'll be ever so nice. Guess who's going to be Santa Claus?" concluded Mrs. Wigglesworth, archly.

"How do I know?" answered Mr. Wigglesworth; "some fool or other, I s'pose."

"You are!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, clapping her hands in glee.

"In a horn I am!" retorted her husband grimly; "look cunning, I would, waltzing round in a little bob-tail fur jacket and handing the minister a string of india-rubber popcorn. Wigglesworth in his great act of climbing a step-ladder and catching his chin whiskers on the chandelier."

"Oh, I guess you will," coaxed Mrs. Wigglesworth; "please do — you're just the one to carry it out."

"Oh, I'll carry it out," grinned Mr. Wigglesworth, in high spirits; "furnish me with ice tongs and I'll carry out anything," and he nodded humorously at the looking-glass.

"How nice it would sound," said Mrs. Wigglesworth with a touch of sentiment, "to be awakened in the morning by the waits."

"What kind of weights?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth.

"I mean the way they do in England," Mrs. Wigglesworth explained; "coming under your window, you know."

"Oh, window weights, eh?" chuckled Mr. Wigglesworth, giving the looking-glass another nod.

He rarely had found himself in better spirits.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, after considerable calculation on her fingers, "that I shall need a little extra money for — for the candy and — and the nuts, you know — and we'll want to make some little presents to the Wetherbees and our other guests."

Mr. Wigglesworth's humor went out like a lamp in a draught.

"There ye go!" he cried angrily, "rushing into expense the first thing."

"We won't spend much," pleaded Mrs. Wigglesworth; "but we don't want to look mean."

"Who ye calling mean?" answered Mr. Wigglesworth in a high key; "ain't you a daisy wife, I 'd like to know, when I 'm closing a hard year and trying to keep my head above water, to go around telling everybody I 'm mean, just because I won't let ye have several hundred dollars to squander on your old Wetherbees? Santa Claus!" he went on in strong disgust, "don't ye ask me to act any of your monkey games. 'F ye want any of your gummy Christmas trees round here you 'll have to have 'em without me!"

Mr. Wigglesworth sighed and let fall a few tears as her husband accompanied himself to bed with an uninterrupted flow of this sort of language. Her plans for a model holiday were tumbled in the dust.

Hence how great was her astonishment next day in looking out of the window to see her husband struggling through the gate in the company of a huge spruce tree, whose limbs stood out stiffly and made progress difficult.

"Why, Ellery!" she called, "what have you got there?"

"What ye s'pose it is?" angrily answered Mr. Wigglesworth, whose face was hot and red with the unwieldiness of the tree; "looks like a steam-heating apparatus, don't it? Reminds ye of a game of ninepins, pro'bly."

Mr. Wigglesworth had cut the tree himself in a woodlot a mile distant, and dragging it home over the frozen roads had been no small labor.

"Why don't ye come down here and lend a hand?" he yelled, pausing to pluck one of the twigs from his eye.

"Why, certainly," purred Mrs. Wigglesworth, hastily running down the steps. "Where did you get it, Ellery?"

"Where d'ye s'pose I got it?" retorted her husband, snatching the tree loose from the gate. "Think I stole it from an orphan? Reckon it was returned if not called for in ten days don't ye?"

"I thought," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, in a mollifying tone, as they dragged the tree up the steps, "that we'd given it up."

"That's it!" cried Mr. Wigglesworth. "That's the way — wait till I've walked eight miles lugging this gash-flummuxed old tree and then tell me you've changed your mind. Why didn't ye say so 'fore I'd made such an idiot of myself?"

"We'll have it, dearest, if you wish it," soothed Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"That's a pretty way to answer, ain't it?" said her husband. "You go to work and get me to invite people to a Christmas celebration, and then try to kick out of it. That's a nice holiday spirit to show toward your own husband, ain't it?"

"Have you invited them?" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"'Course, I have," replied Mr. Wigglesworth. "Didn't we agree to do it last night? Ain't ye willing once in a year to give up selfishness and all them

things and let other people have a little pleasure? What 's the use of being so unpleasant and stuck up?"

"I 'm sure I shall be delighted," whimpered Mrs. Wigglesworth, her head whirling with the peculiar rotary character of her husband's arguments.

By this time they had the tree wedged in the front door.

"Quit holding back on it!" called Mr. Wigglesworth.

"I 'm pushing hard," returned his wife, "but, oh, dear, how pitchy it is. It 's all over pitch, Ellery."

"'Course it is," said Mr. Wigglesworth, pausing to see where the limbs were caught. "What d'ye expect to find on it, mock turtle soup?"

The hired girl came out to help them. Mr. Wigglesworth, his wrath mounting in proportion to the tree's resistance, clawed fiercely at the prickly boughs.

"Why don't ye push?" he yelled to the hired girl; "what ye think I pay ye three dollars a week for, anyway?"

Only those who have struggled with a Christmas tree understand how immovably it can fix itself in a door. Mr. Wigglesworth wrenched and yanked, and said things at which his wife turned pale, and then suddenly losing his hold he dashed for the shed.

"I'll fix it," he shouted, returning with an axe.

It was an almost new hired girl, substituted during the temporary absence of Imogene, a girl whose grasp of the language was limited. The wedged tree, the

loud shouting, the red and swollen face of Wigglesworth, to her untutored mind were fraught with mystery, and when he rushed back with set teeth and brandishing the axe, panic ensued. Uttering a wild shriek, the girl vaulted completely over the tree and scuttled for the cellar.

"What ails that fool, now?" snuffed Mr. Wigglesworth. "Must have left another pie in the oven."

In two minutes he 'd chopped the front hall full of sticky boughs.

"All over my clean rugs, too," complained Mrs. Wigglesworth.

They eventually got the tree stood up in the parlor, and Mrs. Wigglesworth, with the key of the door in her possession, could be seen constantly moving in and out. The air of mystery with which day and night she went clothed, is quite impossible of description.

Chapter XXX

How Wigglesworth Played Santa Claus

"'What 'd I tell ye?' he snapped calling attention to his trussed up legs, 'ain't I a dandy Santa Claus?'" — *Page 275.*

CHAPTER XXX.—*How Wigglesworth Played Santa Claus*

BEHIND the locked doors, the parlor of the Wigglesworth mansion blazed mightily. There stood the Christmas tree, loaded to its topmost bough with beautiful gifts, and the light of countless candles made the dark-green foliage shine eloquently. When the guests arrived, filled with Christmas merriment and turkey, the doors were thrown open, and a loud clamor of tongues ensued. Mr. and Mrs. Wetherbee and Master Augustus Wetherbee were there, Mrs. Coakley had come with her two thin daughters and the minister and his wife had brought along all four of their children.

"Whoop-ee!" cried Willie Wigglesworth.

"Them's my skates!" shrilled little Augustus Wetherbee, clapping his hands.

The minister beamed upon the company and rubbed his palms together.

"Really," he said, in an unctuous voice, "a most delightful occasion. How charming to recall, in the unfettered joy of these little ones, the experiences of our own vanished youth. We should ever be reminded," he added, making a gesture, "that these — er — occasions — are valuable as — er — tending to keep soft our — er — er — our — er — our — er — "

"Hearts," suggested his wife.

"Precisely — our hearts," concluded the minister; "the very word I was about to employ."

"Ma," called Willie, after everybody had grown tired standing around and giving utterance to notes of admiration, "where 's Pa?"

"Sure enough!" exclaimed the minister, "where is Brother Wigglesworth? I declare I had n 't missed him."

Mrs. Wigglesworth wrinkled up her face with an air of great mystery.

"Ellery was detained at the office," she said in a high voice; "he will be here presently."

Then she nodded her head, and smiled with a momentous appearance of secrecy.

"Ah, yes, precisely," answered the minister, also smiling with great intention to indicate his own shrewdness. "I see — ha! ha! — very good!" and he whispered to his wife, who nodded with lively interest.

Mrs. Wigglesworth, with a nervous air, sidled out of the room and rushed up the front stairs.

"Oh, Ellery!" she cried in a hoarse whisper, "can 't you hurry up and hurry down? They 're all waiting, and everybody is getting impatient, and the candles are melting and running over everything?"

Gloom sat upon the brow of Wigglesworth. For some minutes he had been struggling to introduce himself into a pair of fur trousers that originally had been constructed for a much smaller man, and his efforts, though finally successful, had left him in a

blown condition. A wig wrong side foremost sat perched upon his head, and the long and flowing horsehair whiskers trailed over one shoulder in an untutored fashion. When his wife broke in on him Mr. Wigglesworth's smouldering wrath blazed forth.

"What'd I tell ye?" he snapped, calling attention to his trussed up legs; "ain't I a dandy Santa Claus?"

"Oh, you will look splendid," encouraged Mrs. Wigglesworth, "soon as you get your coat and boots on. Do hurry, Ellery, that's a dear."

"Hurry nothing!" snorted Mr. Wigglesworth, angrily; "I told ye I'd make a fool of myself, and blamed if I ain't doing it. What made ye pick out a boy's size?" he snarled, straining himself into the coat.

"It was the only Santa Claus costume the man had," Mrs. Wigglesworth answered, "and you look awfully cute in it. I declare, you look just like a picture out of the books."

Mr. Wigglesworth groaned. Already he could feel the perspiration starting.

"Don't say any more things like that," pleaded Mrs. Wigglesworth. "You know we're doing this to give happiness to others. Now, you go down the back stairs and come around under the parlor window, then I'll make believe I hear bells, and we'll all come and discover you, and then you can jump in through the window and we'll have the presents;" and Mrs. Wigglesworth hastened back to the parlor, where her long absence had been noted with anxiety.

After some moments Mrs. Wigglesworth raised a warning hand.

"Hark!" she said in a play-acting voice: "Methinks I hear the bells!" and she rushed to the window, the guests trooping gaily after her.

If there had been any bells they must have gone past, for though the company peered and flattened their noses on the window, no form could be descried outside.

In point of fact, Mr. Wigglesworth, in getting through the back door had slipped down the steps and nearly unhinged his spinal column. In the close embrace of the costume he found it well-nigh impossible to regain his feet. Dragging himself groaning to the window, he stood waiting in the snow. It was a cold night, and as he waited there under the silent Christmas stars Mr. Wigglesworth could feel the thermometer accompanying his enthusiasm down into the lowest depths. Just as it seemed as if he must ultimately freeze to death right where he stood, Mrs. Wigglesworth once more aroused the jaded interest of the guests.

"I know I heard bells that time," she cried.

"There's somebody!" shrieked little Augustus Wetherbee, who was peering over the lower sash.

"It's Santa Claus!" exclaimed the minister. "Open the window, quick!"

The window was frozen down. It probably was frozen with greater solidity than any other window in in the city. Mr. Wetherbee and the minister heaved and hoisted at it with all their strength.

"I never saw such a window," puffed the minister: "it seems to be fastened with nails."

Mrs. Wigglesworth flew to the front door.

"You'll have to come in this way!" she called in a loud whisper.

Mr. Wigglesworth dragged his congealed legs up the steps.

"What kind of a fool trick ye trying to play on me?" he howled, his voice taking on a horribly weird tone as it struggled through his horsehair whiskers; "mean to keep me out here till my feet drop off, don't ye? Think I want to catch pneumonia acting out a gash-flummuxed old Santa Claus for you?"

"Oh, hush, Ellery!" pleaded his wife, "they 'll hear you!"

"What ye s'pose I care 'f they do?" snuffed Mr. Wigglesworth; "think I 'm going to lose my life prancing around in this little bob-tail jacket?"

"Come right in — come quick!" said his wife agitatedly, hurrying through the hall and raising the portieres.

The entrance of Santa Claus was greeted with applause, though it was easy to see that the success of his appearance had been considerably marred. A sulky Santa Claus is scarcely a thing to call up delight, and it was plain to half an eye that Mr. Wigglesworth was not enjoying himself.

"I know who it is!" shouted Willie, as Santa Claus waddled across the floor, churlishly shaking his head; "it 's Pa!"

"You shut your chin!" muttered Mr. Wigglesworth, and he caught his son a clip on the side of the head that made that astonished young man's teeth rattle.

The distribution of presents went on under conditions of gloomy depression. Mrs. Wigglesworth assisted Santa Claus, and strove to rally the spirit of the occasion.

"Come, Santa," she said in a playful tone, "you must hand us those things from the top boughs."

It had been all arranged with Mr. Wigglesworth in the morning. Mr. Wetherbee brought the step ladder in from the hall.

"You don't get me up that ladder!" growled Mr. Wigglesworth to his wife.

"Oh, please do, Ellery," whispered Mrs. Wigglesworth, pleadingly. "You promised you would. Don't spoil the whole thing that way, I beg of you!"

Mr. Wigglesworth slowly mounted the ladder. It was a wobbly contrivance, and Mr. Wigglesworth stood on the top step with his knees bent at a painful angle. The upper part of the room was intensely hot, and Mr. Wigglesworth broke into a perspiration beyond anything he had ever known.

Then little Augustus Wetherbee stumbled over the foot of the stepladder just as Mr. Wigglesworth was reaching for the topmost bough. Being a household ladder it shut up with instant rapidity, and in a flash Mr. Wigglesworth was in the tree. Mrs. Wigglesworth shrieked, the other women screamed, the min-

ister sprang to the rescue, and the next moment Mr. Wigglesworth and the tree were thundering to the floor, with the minister under them.

"Don't you say a word to me!" screamed Mr. Wigglesworth, when they had got him on his feet, looking dreadful with the horse hair whiskers trailing down his back. "I told ye I'd make a fool of myself, and now I hope you're satisfied. What's that?" he yelled, clawing madly at something that had become affixed to his own side whiskers.

It was the half melted remains of a red candle. With a howl of rage Mr. Wigglesworth dashed it against the wall and stalked savagely out of the room. And Mrs. Wigglesworth knew better than to interrupt him.

Chapter XXXI

How Wigglesworth Swore Off

"'It's something broke out of somewhere.'" — *Page 287.*

CHAPTER XXXI.—*How Wigglesworth Swore Off*

GREAT thoughts and mighty purposes born of the New Year surged and beat within the breast of Mr. Wigglesworth as he made his way home from the office.

"Tell ye what it is, Emma," he broke out as he mechanically laid the piece of tenderloin aside for his own use, "I've come to the conclusion to turn over a new leaf."

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth with an alacrity that any husband would have felt to be keener than the occasion demanded.

"There's no need to get gay," Mr. Wigglesworth said coldly. Then he mashed his potato for awhile with emphasis and Mrs. Wigglesworth preserved discreet silence.

"I know how it is with some of these fellows," Mr. Wigglesworth contemptuously resumed; "swearing off this thing and that thing and then going at it again next week again worse'n ever. I hope I ain't that kind of a weak-minded fool."

"I'm sure you're a very different kind," protested Mrs. Wigglesworth earnestly.

Mr. Wigglesworth glared at his wife for the space of a minute, but that lady unconsciously went on freeing the grounds from the nose of the teapot.

"I mean," pursued Mr. Wigglesworth, restraining

himself, "to overcome some of the faults that I've seen in myself once or twice lately. I believe," said Mr. Wigglesworth, making a gesture at the chandelier with his fork, "that a man ought to hold his unpleasant side in check about the house. A man ain't got no right," he cried, imparting an oratorical roll to his head and voice, "to let out his temper at home. Home ought to be the — er — best place there — er — is. And I've noticed, Emma," he added with a touch of tenderness, "that sometimes I've kinder let my temper slip when you've exasperated me. I don't mean to do it any more. I've taken a new resolve. I've quit. That's what the new year's done for me."

"Oh, I'm ever so glad!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, clapping her hands. "You have given way to your temper so dreadfully, Ellery."

Mr. Wigglesworth frowned.

"You don't have to get up an encore over it," he said sourly.

"Oh, but it has been hard sometimes," protested his wife. "You were so cross, you know, Ellery, when I hadn't done the least thing."

"Oh, no, you hadn't done the least thing," sneered Mr. Wigglesworth, "course not — it's only Wigglesworth that's done the least thing. You're the peacemaker, you are. How To Make Home Happy Though Married, by Ruth Ashmore Wigglesworth. For sale by all druggists. That's what you are.

Mr. Wigglesworth slapped his napkin on the table and kicked back his chair.

"You know we're going to call on the Wetherbee's this evening," suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth, with an anxious sigh.

Taking a great grasp on himself Mr. Wigglesworth got stiffly through the door.

"That's all the encouragement a man ever gets in this house," he said, bitterly. "No," he called, waving his wife back as she started to follow upstairs. "I can find my things myself. I don't want no woman putting in my shirt studs wrong side out."

Every man knows that when he has taken a great resolution to reform himself he has a right to expect assistance from his wife. Mr. Wigglesworth plucked savagely at his collar in maintenance of that principle, and when the collar exhibited a balky disposition, he pulled the buttonholes entirely out of it. Then he tore off his shirt and kicked it under the bed.

"Emma," he bawled, "where's my clean shirt?"

"I laid it right on the chair," returned Mrs. Wigglesworth from the front hall.

"Laid it right on the chair," mimicked Mr. Wigglesworth, standing helplessly in the middle of the room. "Think you're a hen, don't ye? What chair? 'Taint here, I tell ye. You've hid it. Trying to exasperate me some more, that's what you're doing."

Delivering himself of this retort in a voice pitched for the ground floor, imparted a greenish hue to Mr. Wigglesworth's countenance.

"I'm sure I put it on the chair," said his wife, run-

ning upstairs. "There it is now!" she cried, lifting her husband's coat that he had lately cast down. "I knew it was on the chair."

"Oh, yes, you knew," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth snatching the shirt from his wife's hands. "Mrs. Wigglesworth, the Human Encyclopedia. Futures peered into at reduced rates."

"Shall I help you, dear?" cooed Mrs. Wigglesworth.

But Mr. Wigglesworth maintaining a dignified silence, as husbands do, she withdrew.

"Remember the new leaf," she said, playfully, as she went out.

Mr. Wigglesworth punched a stud at the solid and implacable face of the shirt, and the shirt slipped from his grasp and fell to the floor. Also the stud. Mr. Wigglesworth hastily set his heel into the shirt bosom, but the stud was smaller and eluded him. It has continued to do so ever since.

"Why, Ellery Wigglesworth," reproved his wife from the upper hall. "You ought to be ashamed to use such language in your own house."

"You go down stairs, will ye?" returned Mr. Wigglesworth in a condensed voice.

Fifteen minutes later Imogene, passing the door and glancing in, was startled to see what appeared to be a headless monster, eight feet high, without hands but possessing legs that looked like the legs of Mr. Wigglesworth, revolving about the room and clawing down chandelier globes and pictures of great value.

With more than ordinary intelligence Imogene gave one piercing shriek and fell down the front stairs, encountering Mrs. Wigglesworth on the first landing.

"Don't go up!" yelled the girl, her teeth knocking together. "It's something broke out of somewhere."

Mrs. Wigglesworth saw what it was in an instant. In his nervous haste Mr. Wigglesworth had buttoned the neck and wrists of his shirt before essaying to get into that garment. Thousands of men have made the same mistake but few have ever combined it with a New Year's resolution.

"Oh, Ellery!" wailed Mrs. Wigglesworth, as his handless arms struck down a favorite mantle vase.

"Let me out of here!" roared Mr. Wigglesworth, his voice coming horribly from the interior of the shirt. "Take this thing off, can't ye? What ye mean, sewing me up this way like a gash-flummuxed old mummy?"

Then he fell over a hassock and went careering into the bureau. It was a tall and exceedingly heavy mahogany bureau with brass knobs and drawers that sometimes opened by pulling on them a long time. The bureau was a family heirloom and had come down, so Mrs. Wigglesworth used to tell her callers. It never came down any more than it did this time. Mr. Wigglesworth took a long, rooting plunge from the hassock, butted the bureau on its weakest leg, and before Mrs. Wigglesworth could scream twice it was over on him.

Then all you could see for a few moments was a

pair of fashionably attired legs cutting arabesques in the atmosphere, accompanying a muffled voice that came from under the bureau and froze the blood of the hired girl.

Mrs. Wigglesworth, assisted by that young lady, lifted long and earnestly at the bureau, and when they got it up high enough all the drawers fell out at once and entwined Mr. Wigglesworth in a maze of feminine adornments. Mrs. Wigglesworth pulled the offending shirt from his head and Mr. Wigglesworth got his feet under him.

"You're a pretty thing, ain't ye?" he shouted with his earliest breath, "getting me to make a fool New Year's resolution and then sewing up my shirt fronts and trying to strangle me to death. Want my life insurance, don't ye?"

"Why, Ellery," expostulated his wife, "you yourself said ——"

"Shut your face!" snapped Mr. Wigglesworth.

Chapter XXXII

How Wigglesworth Went Into Society

"'Mind the lamp,' warned their host.'"— *Page 297.*

CHAPTER XXXII.—*How Wigglesworth Went Into Society*

"I'VE got a surprise for you," said Mrs. Wigglesworth archly as she poured her husband's tea.

"That so?" gloomed Mr. Wigglesworth whose day at the office had been a rugged one; "some more of them bills of yours, I s'pose. Been coming in on me a steady stream since the year opened."

"We're invited out this evening," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, with a little note of triumph.

"Mumph!" returned her husband, biting into his toast; "that's a dandy old surprise, ain't it? What ye think I care about that? Don't ye s'pose I'm tired enough already, without standing around at a church sociable watching a lot of you old females playing button?"

"It is n't that at all," Mrs. Wigglesworth explained; "it's Mrs. Wetherbee. She wants us to come over and spend the evening playing whist."

"I won't do it!" returned Mr. Wigglesworth defiantly; "don't I tell ye I 'm tired's a dog? Think I want to give up the evening telling you what's trumps? Not much, I don't."

"That 's just what Mrs. Wetherbee said," protested Mrs. Wigglesworth; "she said she supposed you were working extra hard at the office and a little relaxation would do you good."

"Oh, yes," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, "that's her confounded impertinence. Ever since them Wetherbees had a little money left 'em they're so stuck up you can't touch 'em with a pole. That's just their way to come around twitting me with having to work for a living. I despise such people!" and Mr. Wigglesworth, throwing his napkin in his chair and growling loudly, went up stairs.

Mrs. Wigglesworth retired to the sitting-room and gave way to a few tears. Then she sought relief in a magazine and was just regaining some serenity of mind, when her husband, in the full possession of a stand-up collar and his Sunday clothes, appeared in the door.

"Ain't ye going?" he called, noting his wife's ease of manner.

"Going?" faltered Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I thought we'd given it up."

"Given it up nothing!" returned Mr. Wigglesworth; "didn't you say we were invited out? What ails ye, anyway? Ain't ye willing anybody should have a good time? Think I want to stay cooped up in the house every night after slaving my life away in that old office? What ye want to act so selfish for?"

"Why — I'm sure —" stammered Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Oh, yes, you're sure," interrupted her husband with husband-like sarcasm. "Why don't ye go get your clothes on, if you're going to, and not set there all the evening arguing?"

Stunned with her husband's reasoning Mrs. Wigglesworth hastened her preparations with such earnestness as to burn a long red streak down her forehead with the curling iron.

"Delighted to see you!" gushed Mrs. Wetherbee as she greeted them at the front door. "Oh, take care — the floor's dreadfully slippery!"

This warning was evoked by the unexpected conduct of Mr. Wigglesworth, whose heels had accumulated little balls of ice, and who, the instant he struck the polished floor, slid violently across the hall and fell into the hat tree.

"Oh, Ellery!" said Mrs. Wigglesworth with a little scream, "did it hurt you?"

"Shut your head, can't ye?" replied Mr. Wigglesworth in a condensed voice, as he struggled to his feet; "what's the use to make such a fool of yourself?"

The difficulty of regaining his feet and the necessity of muttering these remarks in a subdued tone imparted a remarkable color to Mr. Wigglesworth's features.

"Glad to see you!" said Mr. Wetherbee in a hearty tone of welcome, as they shook hands.

"Yes," chirped Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I told Ellery on the way over that you would be glad to see him. You know, he doesn't go into society much, but I'm sure if he would go more he'd get as used to it as anybody and enjoy it awfully."

Mr. Wigglesworth shook his head in feeble depreca-

tion and embellished his face with a sour smile. Anybody knowing him intimately could have guessed that what he desired most was an opportunity to speak to his wife in private.

"Let us play against each other at first," said Mrs. Wetherbee, arranging the card table; "Wigglesworth versus Wetherbee."

"Oh, that will be ever so nice!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, clapping her hands; "then Ellery can tell me what to play."

Wetherbee dealt and Mr. Wigglesworth led. Mrs. Wetherbee covered his card with a higher one.

"Now, there!" fluttered Mrs. Wigglesworth, "what shall I do, Ellery?"

"Play," answered Mr. Wigglesworth, laconically; "what ye think ye had to do, ring in a fire alarm?"

"I mean," pursued Mrs. Wigglesworth, knitting her forehead, "shall I put on a small one and let them take it, or shall I play a trump? I've forgotton what the rule says, it's so long since I played."

So she threw down a queen and Mr. Wetherbee with a chuckle produced the king.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "why did n't I play the ace?"

"Impossible to say why Mrs. Wigglesworth did n't play the ace," coldly commented her husband as he laid down another card. If Mr. Wigglesworth was happy he tried not to show it.

"Now what's trumps?" asked Mrs. Wigglesworth as her turn came around again.

"Hearts," said Mrs. Wetherbee.

"Same's it was last trick," added Mr. Wigglesworth, in a carefully selected tone.

"Why, of course," acknowledged Mrs. Wigglesworth; "dear me, how stupid of me to keep forgetting so often. Let me see — hearts. Who played that eight spot?"

"I did," replied Mr. Wigglesworth, shortly.

"And Mrs. Wetherbee played the jack," chattered Mrs. Wigglesworth; "now what I ought to do is to — is it third hand high or third hand low, Ellery? But there, it is n't fair to keep asking your partner, is it? Let me see — hearts trumps — is it hearts trumps? — why, of course, you just said so — lummi-tummi-tummi-tee," hummed Mrs. Wigglesworth, running her eyes back and forth over the cards.

"Going to play this evening?" asked Mr. Wigglesworth, glaring across the table.

"Why, of course," Mrs. Wigglesworth answered with a little laugh, "how stupid of me to be so long. But I'm so afraid of making a mistake. Mother used to say when I was a girl that — do I have to follow suit? — yes, of course, how silly of me — hearts — h-e-a-r-t-s — mother used to say, 'Emma, you take so much time making up your mind that when a man does ask you, he'll go away without an answer, and you'll lose him.' But I did n't, did I, Ellery?" she concluded, throwing an arch look at her partner.

"Why don't ye play?" testily rejoined Mr. Wigglesworth; "what ye think it is, a phonograph performance?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth hastily laid down a card and was chagrined to discover that it was the wrong one. The game went on to the utter discomfiture of the house of Wigglesworth. Mr. Wetherbee was in high spirits.

"Tell ye what, Wigglesworth," he said banteringly, as they paused for ice-cream, "you want to get up on your card playing, or somebody'll be touching you for your year's salary."

"Oh, Ellery never would play cards for money," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, "would you, Ellery?"

"I suppose he never plays except for amusement?" suggested Wetherbee, with a laugh, while Mr. Wigglesworth writhed on the sofa.

Mrs. Wetherbee now made a little diversion on the piano and her husband volunteered a song, which he sang in a much bent over position owing to his unfamiliarity with the music.

"Do play a waltz," cried Mrs. Wigglesworth; "they are so lovely."

Mrs. Wigglesworth nodded her head and tapped her foot in time with the music.

"I declare!" she exclaimed gayly, "it makes me feel quite young again. Let's waltz, Ellery."

"Get out!" muttered Mr. Wigglesworth, thrusting his hand deeper in his pockets.

"Oh, but you must," playfully insisted his wife, and she dragged the unwilling Wigglesworth to his feet.

"That's the stuff!" applauded Mr. Wetherbee; "show us what you 're made of, Wigglesworth!"

Louder rose the strains of the piano and Mr. Wigglesworth reluctantly began to revolve with his wife.

"What ye want to keep stepping on my feet for?" he growled.

"It — it is n't so easy as it was once," puffed Mrs. Wigglesworth, who was bobbing around with growing violence.

"Why don't ye keep even?" Mr. Wigglesworth sniffed, "what ye think ye are, a walking-beam?"

"Mind the lamp!" warned their host.

It was a tall lamp with a huge yellow shade at the top and four claw-like legs that sprawled over a rug. Mrs. Wigglesworth's vague recollection of her girlhood dancing was taking her through so eccentric an orbit that Mr. Wetherbee's warning was necessary. It was also a trifle late. With a loud scream Mrs. Wigglesworth felt her heels, out of time, engage with one of the brass claws, and in a second the lamp was pouring its kerosene into the open heart of Mrs. Wetherbee's piano.

"Don't ye give me a word of your back talk," jawed Mr. Wigglesworth as they took their way home; "here I 've gone and wasted a whole evening just to satisfy your cravings for society, and I hope you 're satisfied. You need n't go flaunting your Wetherbees in my face any more," he added in a tone of disgust. "That Wetherbee's a stuck-up dude and for two cents I 'd take and knock his head off."

"He must have cheated at cards," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, shaking her head, "else I don't see how they could beat us every time, do you Ellery?"

Chapter XXXIII

How Wigglesworth Caught the Train

"'Emma,' he shouted, rushing to the head of the stairs, 'where's them shirt studs ?'" — *Page 305.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.—*How Wigglesworth Caught the Train*

"OH, Ellery," implored Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I wish you'd hurry up. Those things have got to be put in the satchel, and I can't find my curling iron anywhere."

"Don't get so nervous," returned Mr. Wigglesworth, calmly, as he folded back the morning paper. "Ain't that a curling iron in your other hand?"

"Why, so it is," acknowledged Mrs. Wigglesworth in surprise. "I've been hunting it ever so long — but there! I'm so excited I just don't know what to do."

"What ails ye, anyway?" said her husband, testily. "Anybody'd think you'd never been anywhere before."

"I know," owned Mrs. Wigglesworth, "but the train starts in another hour, and Aunt Emmeline will be awfully disappointed if we don't get there."

"Poh!" commented Mr. Wigglesworth, addressing the chandelier, "ain't that just like a woman? Can't make a little twenty-five mile trip without flying around like a hen with her head off. Why don't ye take things easy same's I do?"

"I wish I could," replied his wife earnestly. Then she rushed into the kitchen to see about the lunch.

"Humph!" growled Mr. Wigglesworth after her. "It's easy enough if you only try. Just don't fret — that's all there is to it."

Whistling with a man's cool indifference Mr. Wigglesworth repaired to the shed to black his boots.

"Now, where's that brush?" he muttered, as he clawed around in the box devoted to such things; "that boy's pro'bly had it out and lost it. Emma!" he called in a raised voice, "where's that blacking brush?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth, busied in a distant room, failed to hear him.

"Emma!" he bawled again, his face somewhat redder, "where've you women folks hid that brush?"

No answer being vouchsafed, Mr. Wigglesworth strode with much dignity across the shed, and flung open the kitchen door with a bang that dropped a cut glass tumbler from the hands of Imogene to the floor.

"I'd like to know," he cried, "how many times I've got to ask you a question 'fore I can get an answer?"

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth from the front hall; "is that you speaking, Ellery? What are you saying?"

"What am I saying?" repeated Mr. Wigglesworth, with a sneer; "what ye s'pose? Think I'm addressing the county convention, don't ye? Pro'bly think I'm Spartacus advising the gladiators to strike."

"For mercy sake, what is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, appearing in the door. "I'm half distracted looking for my gloves."

"Don't ye go putting on any of your overbearing ways with me," bullied Mr. Wigglesworth, shaking his head. "Why don't ye answer me when I ask a civil question?"

"Why, I will," replied his wife mildly. "What do you want to know?"

"I want to know," said Mr. Wigglesworth in a clear, incisive tone, "what you have done with that blacking brush?"

"Why, I haven't had it," protested his wife, hurrying into the shed.

"Well, some fool has," snapped Mr. Wigglesworth, stalking gloomily after her, "and then left it somewhere instead of putting it in its place, same's I've ordered so many times."

"I saw you brushing your overcoat with it day before yesterday," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, throwing anxious glances about the shed. "There it is!" she exclaimed, "right on the window-sill, where I saw you using it. I knew it was here somewhere."

"You knew a lot, you did," said Mr. Wigglesworth, as he snatched the brush from his wife's hand. "You're the woman that comes around in the Spring getting up answers to correspondents, you are."

"I'm awfully glad I was here to find it for you," cooed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "so you could get shined up in good—"

"Why don't you go into the house?" growled Mr. Wigglesworth, brushing savagely at his boots. "What's the use standing around here doing nothing? Got that clean shirt of mine laid out?"

"I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, throwing up her hands. "I knew there was something I had forgotten to remember," and she hastened away

before her husband should formulate any further comments.

Mr. Wigglesworth brushed on. His boots seemed reluctant to take a polish, and it was some moments before they agreed with his critical taste. Once Mrs. Wigglesworth ventured to open the door, with a suggestion of the fleeting moments, but the countenance that turned up at her over her husband's shoulder stilled the words upon her lips. The boots finished, Mr. Wigglesworth toyed awhile with the axe and the kindlings, and then took a screw driver and made some vague passes at a broken window lock. Then incidentally he took out his watch.

"Great Scott!" he yelled, bursting into the house, "why didn't you tell me it was twenty minutes of train time? Want to go alone, don't ye, and leave me behind? That's just like your selfishness. Where's that shirt?"

Through the hall and up the front stairs lunged Mr. Wigglesworth, throwing off his coat by the way, and dashing into the bedroom like a whirlwind.

"Got that satchel packed?" he shouted, as he plucked at his necktie.

"You — you said you were going to pack that," Mrs. Wigglesworth answered, faintly.

"Pack that nothing," retorted her husband. "How d'ye s'pose I could do all those other chores and pack satchels? What ails this gash-flummuxed old necktie?" he howled, wrenching at it viciously.

"It's got tied in a hard knot," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, coming to his aid. "What shall I do?"

"Do?" cried her husband. "Get it off, can't ye? Get a cross-cut saw and rip it up the back — anything!"

With trembling hands Mrs. Wigglesworth cut the tie with her scissors, and her husband made a dive for his shirt.

"I'll see to that satchel now," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, as she darted down stairs.

Mr. Wigglesworth plunged into the bureau drawer, and in three seconds had its varied contents admirably mingled. His breath came short and loud, and perspiration began gathering on his forehead.

"Emma!" he shouted rushing to the head of the stairs, "where's them shirt studs? Why can't ye leave things where I put 'em? I saw 'em in the drawer only last night. Somebody's stole 'em."

"They're in the shirt," answered Mrs. Wigglesworth. "I put them there so as to save you time."

"Well, why did n't ye say so?" jawed Mr. Wigglesworth. "What's the use to do a thing like that and not mention it?"

Muttering fiercely, Mr. Wigglesworth clawed his way into the stiffly starched shirt, and then, with what speed he was capable of, got into his Sunday clothes.

"Oh, do hurry, Ellery!" wailed his wife, "I hear the train whistling for the crossing."

"Well, it won't come for whistling," answered Mr. Wigglesworth, and, hurried as he was, he paused to note this little flash of humor. The next instant he was charging down the stairs.

"We can make it!" he exclaimed, jamming one arm into his overcoat. "Gimme that satchel — get out of the way — lemme show ye how Wigglesworth fetches a train when his blood's up!"

With a flying bound Mr. Wigglesworth was down the steps, his wife following. At the foot of the steps, on the front walk, was Willie Wigglesworth's sled. It was usually there, when not on the back walk. Mr. Wigglesworth forgot this, however, until too late.

"It was a dreadful sight," said the minister afterwards to his wife. "Brother Wigglesworth struck the sled fairly with both feet, and the sled instantly shot toward the street, with inconceivable swiftness. Flinging the satchel — real alligator it was, too — wildly about his head, and giving utterance to a dreadful whoop, Brother Wigglesworth turned in the air, fell flat upon his back on the sled, and then, with remarkable momentum, dashed down the walk, the contents of the satchel strewing the way, and thrusting both his legs through the picket fence with such violence that it took a policeman and me five minutes to get him out of it."

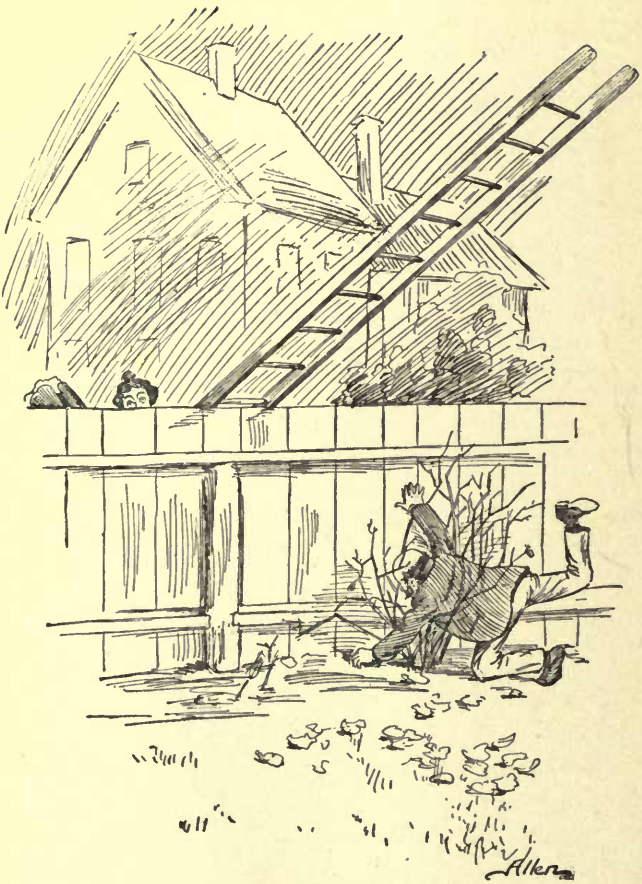
The ministers's wife shook her head commiseratingly.

"Poor man," she said, thinking of the train. "And did he catch it?"

"No;" said the minister, earnestly. Then, after a moment's pause, he added softly, "but Mrs. Wigglesworth did."

Chapter XXXIV

How Wigglesworth Operated the Ladder



"Mrs. Wigglesworth, with a loud shriek, disappeared from view into the neighboring premises."— *Page 314.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.—*How Wigglesworth Operated the Ladder*

THE vagrant autumn winds, ruthlessly rending the dying leaves from their boughs, whirled them dizzily aloft and then went away, leaving the larger part of them lying in the gutters of Mr. Wigglesworth's house. Then followed the driving rains, and the leaves, in sodden masses packed themselves closer and rendered the gutters obsolete.

What was the surprise of Mrs. Wigglesworth, on looking out of the window, to see her husband tacking up the street under the discouraging weight of a thirty-foot ladder. His hat was jammed severely on the back of his head, an angry light played upon his features, and his wife could read, even at a distance, that all had not gone well with the ladder. Even as she gazed, with amazement crowning her visage, the October breeze caught at one end of the ladder and thrust it about so that the other end picked off the bonnet and top hair of a woman who was on her way to the post office, and who instantly emitted a startled scream, whereupon Mr. Wigglesworth whirled the ladder around just in the nick of time to project it into the stomach of a fat gentleman, whose breath instantly shot out of him with a loud *woof!*

Mrs. Wigglesworth could easily discern these particulars, and her imagination supplied the language

of the fierce altercation that immediately ensued. Full of kindly interest for her husband, she rushed to the front door.

"Why Ellery!" she cried in a voice charged with sympathy, "what under the sun have you got there?"

"What ye s'pose it is?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, who at that moment had the ladder involved in the gate, where it caught in seven or eight different places at once; "think it's a soda fountain don't ye? Looks like a horseless wagon, prob'ly?"

"I see that it's a ladder," said Mrs. Wigglesworth in a placating tone, "but what are you going to do with it?"

"What does anybody do with a ladder?" snarled Mr. Wigglesworth, mashing a picket out of the gate, and then, as the ladder suddenly fetched loose, struggling violently into the yard and poking out a cellar window; "going to use it to sift ashes with of course. Wh'd ye s'pose I got it for, to wear to a masquerade ball?"

Throwing the ladder to the ground and kicking at it once or twice as a relief to his feelings, Mr. Wigglesworth pulled his necktie off his shoulder and took a critical survey of the house eves.

"First thing," he said, when his breath had got to playing regularly through his lungs, "is to h'ist the thing up."

"You want to get right under it and keep pushing," suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"That's it," returned her husband, "you've hit it,

first time. How to Find Out Things, by Mrs. Wigglesworth, for the use of wives who want to make home attractive in spite of themselves."

Grasping the ladder at one end he raised it above his head and walked slowly under it until its weight became excessive.

"Catch hold here, can't ye?" he cried. "Want to see the thing fall and cave in my head?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth promptly lent assistance, and the instant her husband felt the relief he took down his own benumbed arms and caressed them. Mrs. Wigglesworth endured the burden for a few brief seconds and then, with a loud cry, dropped her hold and jumped away. The ladder, clattering downward, scraped closely to Mr. Wigglesworth's ear, and nearly broke off one of his shoulders.

When he had recovered they called out Imogene. Mrs. Wigglesworth was shown how to rest her weight upon one end of the ladder while Mr. Wigglesworth and Imogene should begin at the other end, and by slow progression raise it against the side of the house.

"Lift! Lift! grunted Mr. Wigglesworth to the hired girl; "don't leave it all for me to do!"

"It's beginning to lift at this end," called Mrs. Wigglesworth in agitation.

"Well, hold it still," bawled her husband.

"I can't!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth, and then, to her horror, she felt herself slowly rising from the ground.

Mr. Wigglesworth and Imogene, having penetrated

beyond the centre of gravity, and serving as a fulcrum, the longer end of the ladder, following the law of physics, trailed downward, lifting Mrs. Wigglesworth at the opposite extremity. The weight pressed awfully upon Mr. Wigglesworth, but he dare not loose his hold for fear that it all might come down upon him in disaster. Then he noticed his wife.

"Get off that ladder!" he yelled; "what ye doing up there!"

"I — I can't help it, Ellery!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth, gripping tenaciously at the rounds; "Oh, do let me down!"

"Let ye down!" howled Mr. Wigglesworth, "how ye s'pose I'm stopping ye? Boost, can't ye?" he hissed to Imogene, who, with eyes stonily set in her head, held aloft a pair of red arms that neither winced nor faltered.

Staggering about in this painful fashion, a see-saw motion was communicated to the ladder, and Mrs. Wigglesworth bobbed slowly up and down like an old-fashioned pair of steel-yards.

"Quit that teetering!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, the veins of whose neck were getting ready to burst and run all over his wilted collar; "what ye think this is, a game? Reckon it's a Sunday-school picnic, don't ye?"

These observations seemed to be forced out of him explosively, as he trod up and down the soggy lawn. Citizens going by had to stop, astounded to see a man and woman balancing a ladder above their head for

no ostensible reason, and another woman bobbing away upon one end of it and screaming. A crowd of these people now lined the fence and some of them volunteered advice.

"I would n't stay up there any longer," kindly ventured a benevolent-looking man; "that rocking motion is certain to produce nausea."

"It's an elopement — don't you see it is?" put in a man with a purple nose. "That old fellow under the ladder caught her just in time."

"She looks too aged to be eloping," said a man in whiskers.

"You can't tell," retorted the purple-nosed man, with a shake of the head; "some of these women will do anything to get married."

"I think," called the benevolent-looking man, "that if you can hold on for a few moments longer I can ring up the hook and ladder company," and he made as if he would start off instantly.

Some of these remarks penetrated to the ears of Mr. Wigglesworth. Maddened by the dreadfulness of the situation, enraged by the thought that he was creating a scene that would be certain to get into the papers, he put all his strength into action and with his burden charged furiously up the driveway. At the rear of his lot rose a high board fence, and with a a loud snarl of rage he aimed the ladder for it. The upper end, with Mrs. Wigglesworth upon it, caught the fence top, with its impetus, slid partially over, and then its free end flung itself into the air and Mrs.

Wigglesworth, with a loud shriek, disappeared from view into the neighboring premises.

"Hoo-ray!" screamed the audience by the fence.

Mr. Wigglesworth picked himself out of the leafless rosebush and shook his fist at them savagely.

"If any of you loafers will step over in this yard," he called, scowling fiercely, "I'll take and knock his head off."

Chapter XXXV

How Wigglesworth Skated

"'I'm going to show ye how me and Aleck Dodley used to do a spread eagle.'" — *Page 322.*

CHAPTER XXXV.—*How Wigglesworth Skated*

THE heavy rain had overflowed the back yard and the sudden freeze following made a miniature ice pond of it. Over this smooth surface Willie Wigglesworth took his wobbling way, thrashing his arms and snapping his body to and fro violently.

"I think Willie does very well," approved Mrs. Wigglesworth, looking out of the dining-room window.

"Poh!" said Mr. Wigglesworth contemptuously, "if I could n't do better than that I'd sell out. Me and the Dodley twins were the skaters for ye when we were boys. Could n't none of 'em skate around us. People used to come and watch us, I remember. You ought to seen me cut a spread eagle."

"I'm sure it must have been sweet," said Mrs. Wigglesworth; "I'd like to see you do it now."

"Well, I guess I could do it," said Mr. Wigglesworth with a boastful shake of the head; "but I'm getting too old for such things, I s'pose." And he gave a little sigh of regret over his lost youth.

Willie at that instant going down on the back of his neck Mrs. Wigglesworth hastened out with the liniment bottle, while her husband repaired to the office. All through his busy forenoon visions of that ice patch went galloping.

"There!" he exclaimed with an important air, lay-

ing a package on the table, "there's something that's got the ginger right in it."

"Oh, what is it?" said Mrs. Wigglesworth, backing away.

"Don't be scart," replied her husband; "'twon't bite ye. What ye think it is anyway—tarantulas? Reckon it's some of them sweet pickles of yours, don't ye? It's a pair of skates, that's what it is," Mr. Wigglesworth triumphantly concluded.

"Ellery Wigglesworth," cried his wife, "you don't mean to tell me that you are going to skate?"

"Why not?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth smartly; "ain't I got as much right to as anybody? Wa'n't you saying so, this morning?"

"Ye—es, of course," hesitated his wife; "but at your age—and it's so long since you—"

"Oh, yes, there you go," said Mr. Wigglesworth in a high key, "never willing for me to have any fun—just keep Wigglesworth slaving at the office earning money to support your extravagances—that's all you care. Don't ye s'pose I like a little relaxation? Think I don't need exercise? Want me to fail up on your hands and be a wreck, don't ye? That's all you care about me."

Comforting himself with this sort of after-dinner talk Mr. Wigglesworth repaired to the back yard and busied himself with the skates. They were the new-fashioned club skates and Mr. Wigglesworth experienced considerable difficulty in their adjustment.

"What kind of fool things are these anyway!" he

muttered, twitching at them savagely; "why don't they have straps to 'em, same 's they did when I was a boy?"

"You're trying to put them on hind side first," volunteered Willie; "they go the other way."

"You shut your head," advised Mr. Wigglesworth, "or I'll take and shut it for ye. You boys nowadays are getting most too smart."

Willie meekly retired to the fence and Mr. Wigglesworth fumbled on. Somehow his fingers had grown to be two inches in diameter and all feeling was gone out of them. His breath, coming laboredly, hung in a smoking cloud above his head.

"Why don't ye come out here and help a feller?" he yelled, noticing Mrs. Wigglesworth looking through the window; "what ye standing in there for with your thumb in your mouth? Think I want to set here till my legs freeze off just to amuse you?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth came hastily forth, a shawl thrown over her head, and with her assistance, and some grudgingly accepted advice from Willie, the skates were finally adjusted to Mr. Wigglesworth's feet. Then that gentleman made a motion to stand up, but appearing to think better of it, hastily resumed his sitting posture. Looking around angrily he encountered Willie.

"What are you laughing at?" he demanded sternly.

"I — I was n't laughing," stammered Willie.

"Yes ye was too!" said Mr. Wigglesworth with a threatening shake of his head. "Don't ye give me

any of your lip, young man, or I'll take and dust that jacket of yours till you'll think you've been through a steam carpet beater."

With much circumspection, and steadying himself by a grasp on his wife's skirts, Mr. Wigglesworth achieved a semi-upright position, and then a foot shot suddenly toward the zodiac and with extraordinary swiftness he jarred the neighborhood.

"What'd ye do that for?" he shouted, shaking both fists in the air.

"I did n't do anything," protested his wife.

"Yes, you did too!" cried Mr. Wigglesworth; don't ye s'pose I know? 'Fore I was ready you took and twitched away and flung me off my balance. Want to see my skull split open, don't ye? Want to have some fun collecting my accident policy, prob'ly. Now stand still, can't ye, and not act so numb."

Once more Mr. Wigglesworth attained his feet. Grasping his wife's arm firmly he made one or two uncertain strokes, his body lunging forward at a painful angle.

"Where 's that hired girl," he cried loudly; "why ain't she out here doing some good? Can't she leave off smashing them dishes a minute and do something worth while?"

Imogene now came forth. Imogene's motto was to please. She came out wearing one of Mr. Wigglesworth's summer hats.

"Here," called that gentleman in a tone of authority, "come get on the other side."

"Wha — what are you going to do, Ellery?" gasped Mrs. Wigglesworth, her strength nearly exhausted with holding her husband erect.

"Do?" replied Mr. Wigglesworth hotly, "what ye s'pose I 'm going to do? Think I 'm going to revolve on the flying trapeze, don't ye? Can 't ye see that I 'm out of practice? All I want is a little steadying, till I get my hand in again, and then I 'll show you some cavorting that'll make your eyes stick out."

With his body bent uncomfortably forward and his elbows supported on either side by his feminine assistants Mr. Wigglesworth progressed slowly across the yard. The woman next door now put up her kitchen window and began to take notes.

"It 's — it 's awfully slippery," whimpered Mrs. Wigglesworth, feeling the weight growing heavier.

"That 's it!" snapped her husband as loudly as his position would admit, "find fault all ye can. If it's slippery to you what ye s'pose it must be for me, boosted up here on these gash-flummuxed old skates? Don't ye be so selfish — quit that!" he suddenly yelled to the girl on his left.

"I — I did n't do nawthin'," answered Imogene.

"Yes, ye did too!" jawed Mr. Wigglesworth; "you let down your hold — not that way!" he called again as the girl gave an energetic boost, "don't ye see them sudden jerks make my neck crack?"

When they had gone around the yard three or four times Mr. Wigglesworth had arrived at a nearly upright position and even ventured to make a stroke or two by himself.

"Ah, that's the stuff!" he exclaimed approvingly; "that's the way me and the Dodley twins used to give it to 'em. Now look out there!" he cried, his blood mounting with sudden enthusiasm, "I'm going to show ye how me and Aleck Dodley used to do a spread eagle."

Mrs. Wigglesworth instinctively raised her voice in a note of remonstrance.

"Don't try it, Ellery, I beg of you," she said, but her words only spurred her husband on.

"The way to do it," he explained, "is to take three or four strokes, then throw your heels around back to back and sail ahead."

Suiting the action to these words Mr. Wigglesworth struck out boldly. The woman next door, in explaining it afterwards to the reporter, said that when Mr. Wigglesworth started to throw his heels around he must have thrown one of them around five or six times, and the other nearly twice as many, judging by the different directions that he shortly afterwards appeared striving to proceed in. It was awful, she said, to hear the loud clicking of Mr. Wigglesworth's vertabræ as his body violently jack-knifed back and forth, and never, she declared with a shudder, had she seen such language screamed over a back-yard fence as Mr. Wigglesworth gave utterance to, as with his arms clawing at the keen winter atmosphere he went hurtling the whole length of the yard and disappeared into a collection of braided rugs hung out to air, with which he instantly involved himself, and then

going down with a jar that was distinctly felt in the neighboring cellars.

"My darling Ellery!" screamed Mrs. Wigglesworth rushing frantically across the ice and slipping heavily down upon her fallen husband.

"Oh — oh — oh —!" moaned Mr. Wigglesworth; "oh, my poor medula oblongata!"

"He's wandering — he's out of his head!" sobbed Mrs. Wigglesworth hysterically; "he's calling on some Italian actress."

Then Mr. Wigglesworth came back to himself.

"What's this?" he howled, pawing fiercely at the braided rugs; "who tied this gash-flummuxed old relic around my neck? Take it away — take it away, I tell ye!"

Then he wrenched off the skates and flung them viciously against the fence.

"That's the way!" he shouted, struggling to his feet, "that's the way I get served, when I take your advice."

"My darling Ellery!" said Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Don't ye Ellery me!" jawed Mr. Wigglesworth as he limped up the steps; "I never tried yet to do a thing to please you but I made a fool of myself, and the next time you want any skating done you and that leather-headed hired girl can go off by yourselves and do it. You know just about enough between ye not to keep off the thin ice and I'd give five dollars to be there and see ye do it."

And long after the house was closed the woman next door could still hear Mr. Wigglesworth rumbling.

Chapter XXXVI

How Wigglesworth Settled Woman's Suffrage

"'The marshal will conduct him as our welcome guest to a seat.'" — *Page 330.*

CHAPTER XXXVI.—*How Wigglesworth Settled Woman's Suffrage*

"THE ladies of the—the Saturday Afternoon Suffrage Club are going to meet here this—this afternoon," fluttered Mrs. Wigglesworth, looking earnestly into the coffee pot, as if there were something particular there demanding her attention.

Mr. Wigglesworth paused with his knife half way to his mouth and shot across the table a look that passed quite through his wife and caromed on the sideboard.

"The what meets here?" he said, with emphasis on the what.

"Why, our—our Saturday Afternoon Suffrage Club," stammered his wife. "We meet and discuss suffrage, you know," she went on; "that's why we call it the Suffrage Club, and we call it the Saturday Afternoon Suffrage Club because we meet on Saturday afternoons, you know."

"Oh, yes," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, with firm sarcasm. "I see—I understand that. Most men would think it was called the Saturday Afternoon Club because it met on Monday morning and took in washing, but Wigglesworth knows better. Sharp fellow, that Wigglesworth—even his wife sees that! Well, what do ye do when ye get there? Talk and play whist during the lull in conversation?"

"No," explained his wife, "we discuss questions about — about suffrage, you know, and — and —"

"There, there — that'll do!" croaked Mr. Wigglesworth, loftly; "that's enough — I don't want to hear another thing about it. Suffrage! S'pose ye want to vote, don't ye?"

"Why," Mrs. Wigglesworth timidly assented, "we think it is no more than right that —"

"Oh, yes; of course," jeered her husband, "you've got it — you understand the whole thing! Put you and John Stuart Mill together and you'd know it pretty near all. Who belongs to this female amalgamation of latter-day thinkers?"

"Why," Mrs. Wigglesworth returned, knitting her forehead thoughtfully, "there's Mrs. Lundley, and Miss Simmons, and Miss Tosh, and Mrs. Brimley, and Mrs. Remley Hemingway, and ever so many more. And they said they did hope you would be present and —"

"Me!" cried Mr. Wigglesworth; "me be present? Well, I guess not!" he added grandly; "hope I've got more sense than to go prancing round after a parcel of bald-headed females in glasses. Want to get me to head a petition, I s'pose? Think I'd be a good hand to present a preamble and four resolutions to the state convention, don't they? Well, they can't catch old Wigglesworth with none of that foolishness, I may not be so old as some of these women, but I bet I know as much!"

"They said they'd be very much — much flattered

if you'd come," cooed his wife. "They said your — your experience and practical view of — of things would be of great value, and they really did hope you would honor them."

"Pooh! pshaw! great lots!" Mr. Wigglesworth sniffed, but the shaft of flattery got under his armor, and he went to the office carrying his head a little higher than usual.

"B'George!" he said to himself, smiting the desk and grinning, "it would serve them smart Aleck women right to go there and hear some of their fool talk and then get up and let daylight into them!"

The more Mr. Wigglesworth turned this about in his mind the more fun it appeared to promise him, and people who understood the operation of that gentleman's reasoning powers could readily comprehend why, shortly after the club hour, he was seen skipping jauntily up his own front doorsteps and letting himself into the hall. His idea was to create a sensation by walking in on the ladies, and by his ease of manner and lofty carriage to dwarf their presumptuous proceedings into proper insignificance. These were not exactly his words, but they contain the idea.

But when he opened the parlor door and stepped inside, his haughtiness was instantly lowered. The president of the meeting, well-dressed and of commanding presence, was speaking, and at the swinging of the door she turned and surveyed the conquering Wigglesworth, balancing her gold-rimmed glasses daintily in her fingers.

"It is rather unusual," she said with remarkable self-possession, "for our proceedings to be interrupted in this summary manner, but naturally Mr. Wigglesworth — for I presume it to be the husband of our hostess — could not have been acquainted with our rules. The marshal will conduct him as our welcome guest to a seat."

A trig little woman with black eyes and the prettiest red cheeks in the world took the noble Wigglesworth in tow, and marched him, in the face of two or three dozen amused women to the front of the apartment. The lordly Wigglesworth, the pride of his carriage all pulled out of him by this ordeal, after stepping on his own feet and confusedly begging his own pardon, slunk into a chair. Then he saw that he was close under the president's eye, and also facing every woman in the room. Taking out his handkerchief he mopped his forehead gingerly.

Then the proceedings went on, while Mr. Wigglesworth stole furtive glances about the room. What he saw didn't tend to restore his sunken spirits. The ladies were immaculately dressed; they presented an assured bearing that the entrance of a man had failed in the least to dash, and he caught now and then a laughing eye bent in his direction. This operated to set his garments still more closely to him.

"Naturally," the president resumed, when the confusion had subsided, "in pursuing our desire for the exercise of the ballot, we do not expect instantly to impress our opinions upon the men — the lords of

creation," she added lifting her eyebrows slightly in Mr. Wigglesworth's direction. "But we must persevere, we must be patient. Many of us are growing in the knowledge of this movement. Let me urge upon you the wisdom of obtaining from our opponents always, when possible, their reasons why the ballot should be withheld from us. This will inevitably furnish material for thought, and thought, well directed, will produce in you increasing strength of purpose. For an illustration, how helpful might it not be to us if the husband of our hostess, who has kindly consented to honor our humble proceedings, should deign to give us, in his own language, his views upon the woman's suffrage movement."

A ripple of applause ran round the room at this suggestion. Mr. Wigglesworth felt all the blood in his system charge into his head and then die away, just as the lid seemed about to burst off. He saw the president gazing at him with a mingled air of kindness and amusement. The other women seemed to be whirling about the room in a circle, like a revolving toy that he remembered once looking into.

"I — I — er — you — er — blm! blm!" Mr. Wigglesworth exclaimed, clearing his throat with great effort; "you will — er — not — not — er — being —" and then, with a little helpless rattle, his voice staggered across the carpet and expired under the mahogany table.

"Perhaps later," the president suggested, "when the other speakers have tried to give voice to their

somewhat crude opinions, Mr. Wigglesworth will find something more worthy of his attention. I confess that up to this moment he has seen nothing that has made it worth his while to address us."

Mr. Wigglesworth tried to resurrect his wilted collar, as he looked uneasily at the piano. He would have given a dollar, or more, for a friendly glance from his wife, but that lady was on the outer edge of the company and inaccessible.

"My husband says," began a woman in a Worth gown, "that it won't do to let the women vote, for when they do, he says, they 'll make the officers enforce the prohibitory law, and that will hurt business."

Mr. Wigglesworth recalled that he and his next-door neighbor had come to the same conclusion only the week before.

"Thirty years ago," said a tall woman in gray hair, "I married my husband, who was then a poor but honest man, and he has frequently been that way since. The times that he prospers best are those in which he is governed by my suggestions."

A wave of applause broke forth at this.

"I hope," the president blandly commented, with another glance at the withered Wigglesworth, "that this remark of our sister may not be deemed presumptuous. I doubt not that every woman present understands how often her husband comes to her for advice. Intuitively she discerns the course that is best. Her advice follows swiftly, but it is oftenest right, and if acted upon, the husband prospers. Walk-

ing about our streets today are men counted rich and successful, men who but for their wives' unerring judgment would be lying shipwrecked. And it is oftenest this sort of man, the one that leans upon his wife steadfastly, who laughs to utter scorn the suggestion that she should be intrusted with voting power. No man, I am sure, has remarked this more clearly than our guest of the afternoon, and the club will now consider itself honored if Mr. Wigglesworth will kindly explain to them how it appears to him."

Alas! that the historian should have to chronicle it. What shall the harvests be, if the lists thus broadly open, no champion rides forth? Where now the invincible Wigglesworth, his quips, his gibes, his ready flow of speech? This was the opportunity he had looked forward to — this the exact moment to lift his trenchant blade of speech and "let daylight into them." The western sun slanted in at the parlor window and rippled upon the wall. But the daylight of Mr. Wigglesworth's furnishing was elsewhere. Sometimes into every man's life such tragedy comes.

When Mrs. Wigglesworth came back from the hall, having bade the last member good-bye, she found her husband still sitting in the chair. His air of utter dejection alarmed her.

"Are you ill, Ellery?" she anxiously cried, running across the room with outstretched hands.

Mr. Wigglesworth sprang to his feet, a more than roused lion.

"Don't ye lay a finger on me!" he shouted, grab-

bing up a gilt subscription volume of poems and dashing it into the piano, where it made a horrible grinding with the bass strings; "what ye think ye're trying to act out, anyway, with your old collection of fossil remains? Want me to go on a red-headed ticket, don't ye, and haul female voters to the polls? What ye trying to do, filling this house full of fat old emancipated women with spectacles? Spectacles!" he snorted with concentrated scorn, and elated by the clever turn of his humor, "that's just what they are, and the worse the more of it! S'pose you 'll be wanting a little suit of bloomers next, won't ye, and go pawing round on a bicycle! Ya-a-a-h-h!" he yelled, as thought of the afternoon's roasting smote upon him, "you think it all-fired cunning to get a mess of old maids rubbing their mud off on this new carpet and trying to look intelligent, but you need n't think you can fool old Wigglesworth. I saw through ye from the start! You thought you was going to get me to make a speech and blow the stuffing out of their fool remarks — and I could have done it, too, in less than a jiffy — and then they 'd have gone waltzing round town saying Wigglesworth insulted them in his own house, and so make political capital out of it and get sympathy, but you've got to get up in the morning, I tell ye, the whole kit and bilin' of ye, if you expect to play them little games on Wigglesworth. None of your back talk round here!" he shouted, as Mrs. Wigglesworth opened her mouth; "you can jaw all you want to with your long-necked old suffragists, but

I want ye to understand that in this house I'm the boss, and the public wants to be acquainted with it."

And Mrs. Wigglesworth said to the neighbor who came in that evening to borrow some yeast, that she never had known Ellery to have such a flow of language.

Chapter XXXVII

How Wigglesworth Renewed his Boyhood

"It was a snowball with a marble heart."—*Page 341.*

CHAPTER XXXVII.—*How Wigglesworth Renewed His Boyhood*

"I DECLARE," said Mr. Wigglesworth, who was looking out of the front window, "if that does n't make me feel like a boy again!"

In the vacant lot across the street the boys of the neighborhood, his own among the number, had cast up the walls of a snow fort, and now a fine mimic battle was raging. Mr. Wigglesworth noted the life and action and his blood moved quicker. A man's blood will do that way when his youth comes back to him. He recalled that Napoleon fought snow-fights at Brienne.

"B'George!" he exclaimed with a shuffle of his feet, "if I have n't two minds to go out and give those boys a try myself."

"Don't you think you might take cold?" chirped Mrs. Wigglesworth, who was looking over his shoulder.

That settled it. All Mr. Wigglesworth wanted was his wife to file an objection.

"Ba-h-h-h!" he growled, instantly hoisting his voice to a high key; "you're always wanting me to muffle up and totter and drop into the tomb. Think you're going to get my life insurance, don't ye? Where's my mittens!" And the next instant Mr. Wigglesworth was sliding down the front stoop and plowing across the yard on his back, having slipped in his haste as he

came through the door. The boys saw him and stayed the battle for a moment.

"Who's de cove in de red mittens?" cried one of them.

"It's pa," shouted Willie Wigglesworth, as the old man struggled to his feet. "Hooray, pa — look at our fort!"

Mr. Wigglesworth picked his enthusiasm out of the snow and said:

"Boys, I remember when me and the Dodley twins had forts all one winter, and I'm going to show you lads how us old fellows used to run a fight."

"Whoo-pee!" yelled the boys.

"That's it!" cried Mr. Wigglesworth, enthusiasm mounting. "I'll stand the whole crowd of ye. Get into the fort there, and look out for me, for down come the walls at the first onslaught."

Nuts for the boys? If the slang may be pardoned that's exactly what it was. With a yell they got inside the fort, and the boy with two front teeth missing instantly lodged a snowball against Mr. Wigglesworth's prominent adam's apple.

"Who did that!" he shrieked, as the fractured snowball slid down inside his shirt-bosom. "Don't ye see I was n't ready?"

Nobody volunteering an answer Mr. Wigglesworth swallowed his passion and hastily rolled up some balls of snow.

"You boys," he said, as he ostentatiously went through these preparations, "are too slow. You

stand off and discharge projectiles at each other, but what does that amount to? What I propose to do is to carry your works by assault, y'understand, same's I used to do with the Dodley twins. I give ye fair warning, you see, because I'm a man and don't want to hurt ye. Once I get inside your fort you must scatter, else of course I'll have to fire you out. Now look out, for the old man's coming, and death rides on the gale."

The poetry of battle mounted in Mr. Wigglesworth's imagination as he shouted these warning words, and then he charged forward. It never was clearly explained to him what next took place. Mrs. Wigglesworth, who was looking on from the window, said that for an instant the sun was obscured by two million snowballs that issued from the fort, every one of which, she thinks, struck Mr. Wigglesworth on the head.

That was subsequently understood to be Mr. Wigglesworth's opinion also.

Half-way up to the fort, her deposition continues, Mr. Wigglesworth encountered quicksands in the form of yielding snow, into which he sank so deeply that his line of attack wavered. This gave opportunity for the beseiged to discharge another volley, wherein was displayed the almost superhuman accuracy of aim of the boy with two front teeth missing. It was a snowball with a marble heart, the marble having been frozen into it over night, and it flattened Mr. Wigglesworth's nose so closely to his face that

his own family never could have picked him out among the dead.

A man chopping wood over behind the mountain put a piece in the local paper stating that he distinctly heard Mr. Wigglesworth's yell. It was a clear, frosty day, when sound travels a great distance.

"Who fired that rock?" screamed Mr. Wigglesworth. He was answered by a cheer and another volley. Willie Wigglesworth was overheard by a comrade who stood next in line, a boy with freckles but said to be quite truthful, to hiss between his smoke-begrimed lips that he'd give two cents to plug one into the old man's ear, and the boy afterwards stated that the feat was accomplished, and claimed the two cents.

The historian has to confess that the vehicle of narrative is inadequate to the rapid action of the scene which Mrs. Wigglesworth with bated breath now witnessed from the window. Her husband, she states, appeared to have abandoned his intention of showing how battles were won in the days of the Dodley twins, and she judged by the frenzied manner in which he plucked his legs out of the clinging snow and lashed the atmosphere with his arms and uttered remarks that it were not fit for women to hear, though she listened as carefully as she could and even tried to get the window open, but it was frozen down, that his purpose was to catch as many boys as he could in his two hands at once and pull their legs off, which seemed to her a horrible thing to do, but few of us

realize, unless we have been there, and none of us have if we could secure a substitute, what a terrible thing war is.

But just as he got close under the walls and was reaching for a boy, Mr. Wigglesworth suddenly disappeared from the gaze of his horrified wife. The boys, with a knowledge of warfare such as the Dodley twins never dreamed of, had mined the snowdrifts before the walls, and when Mr. Wigglesworth's heavy weight was projected upon the super-impending crust, he went through without waiting a moment to take breath. At the bottom of the excavated space the juvenile engineers with great ingenuity had arranged a small pond of water in which to freeze snow-balls, and which was found to be large enough to take in all of Mr. Wigglesworth at once. The boys then tipped the walls of the fort over on him, and with three cheers for the Dodley twins trooped gaily away.

"Why, Ellery!" sympathized Mrs. Wigglesworth as she held the door open while her husband dragged slowly up the steps; "don't you—"

"You get into the house!" yelled Mr. Wigglesworth, "and don't you let me have any more yap out of your head about being young again. 'F I'd gone to the office as I intended instead of trying to sprawl around here amusing you I'd been earning money now to support your extravagances, instead of looking like a blamed fool for your old-maid neighbors to point their crooked fingers at. Prance me out some dry clothes, d'ye hear, and don't be standing around there all day with your hands in your mouth like a gibberin diot!"

Chapter XXXVIII

How Wigglesworth Got A Valentine

"'Yah-yah-yah,' snarled Mr. Wigglesworth as he slammed the front door." — *Page 352.*

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—*How Wigglesworth Got a Valentine*

THE door bell rang while they were at breakfast, and presently Imogene came in with a letter, which she laid by Mrs. Wigglesworth's plate.

"O-o-h-h!" said that lady, with a little scream of surprise. "A letter for me! Why, who do you suppose it is from?"

She turned the envelope over a number of times and examined it from every point of the compass.

"I wonder who it can be from?" she repeated, with her forehead furrowing.

"What odds does it make?" said Mr. Wigglesworth, testily. "Think it's from the Ahkoond of Swat, don't ye? Prob'ly an invitation from the Czar to run over and have a game of gorf on the ice."

"You don't suppose," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, laying her hands on the table, "that it's from Aunt Sarah, do you? You know she said last Summer that she might come on and spend a month or two this Winter."

"Well, she don't get in, if she does!" violently answered Mr. Wigglesworth. "Think I'm going to have that old female around here again talking woman's rights and me having to get up nights to heat hot-water bottles for her neuralgia? Not much, I ain't," growled Mr. Wigglesworth, shaking his head at the sideboard.

"But, no," his wife went on, after scanning the envelope from another point of view, "this can't be from Aunt Sarah, because the postmark is so blurred that you can't make out where it's from. Oh, dear," she sighed, "how bothersome such things are!"

Mr. Wigglesworth sawed away at his steak.

"Seems to me," he said, in a voice of sarcasm, "that Mrs. Wiggles is more than unusually numb this morning. Why don't ye look inside the letter if ye want to know who its from. Think you're the new discovery in photographing, don't ye? Mrs. Wigglesworth in her great act of looking into things by a process of her own. Patent applied for."

Taking a hairpin from the back of her head, Mrs. Wigglesworth slipped it neatly under the flap of the envelope. With nervous fingers she plucked forth and opened to view a gaudily colored valentine. Mrs. Wigglesworth's countenance fell.

"Pshaw!" she said, in a tone of disappointment, "it's a valentine."

"That so?" answered her husband, blowing at his coffee. "Who's fallen in love with you? Mrs. Wigglesworth and her latest mash. Guess I'll have to be looking into matters."

"Ellery Wigglesworth," retorted his wife, severely, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You know very well that I wouldn't let anybody send me a valentine."

"Ain't he done it?" cried Mr. Wigglesworth, appealing to the sideboard. "Ain't she got it right there in her hand?"

"It — it's a comic valentine," sobbed Mrs. Wigglesworth, dashing it to the floor and applying her napkin to her eyes; "and I think it — it is nothing but an — an insult, El — Ellery Wigglesworth — that ought — ought — "

"Poh" interrupted Mr. Wigglesworth. "What's the use to get so excited over a little thing like that? Can't ye stand a little fun?"

"I — I guess you — you would n't like it," answered his wife, dabbing at her eyes with the napkin.

"There, there, Emma," said Mr. Wigglesworth in a lofty manner; "don't go acting childish. I hope I ain't quite a fool. When I get so I can't stand a little fun I want some one to take and knock me in the head. But that's just like a woman," he added, nodding again at the sideboard, "they ain't got no more idea of humor than a cow. Le's see that thing," he commanded, reaching out his hand, "le's see the terrible libel that has upset the digestion of the celebrated Mrs. Wigglesworth."

His wife recovered it from the floor and passed it across the table.

"H'm!" said Mr. Wigglesworth, holding the valentine critically at arm's length, "I don't see any thing the matter with this."

It was a dreadful mixture of red and yellow ink setting forth an unwieldly looking individual in the guise of a distorted hot-air balloon, and bearing beneath it some ill-rhymed verses addressed to "An Old Wind Bag."

"He-he-he!" grinned Mr. Wigglesworth.

"I — I think it's real mean in you to — to laugh," said his wife, renewing her sobs.

"What's the use to beller and take on that way?" cried Mr. Wigglesworth; "can't ye stand a little fun?"

"Not of that sort," replied Mrs. Wigglesworth with spirit. "What right has anybody to call me an 'Old Wind Bag!'" And her voice choked with anger.

Mr. Wigglesworth chuckled. Really it was quite humorous.

"And look at those lines," continued Mrs. Wigglesworth:

> "You puff and blow from morn to night
> And keep your family in affright,
> But as you swelling walk abroad
> The neighbors know you are a fraud —

"And all that — that stuff!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth, crying still harder.

"They're getting onto ye," he jeered.

"Do you mean to tell me, Ellery Wigglesworth," demanded his wife sternly, "that those horrid verses describe me?"

"Why not?" retorted Mr. Wigglesworth. "Don't ye go getting on any high horse with me. Its just them things that the neighbors are noticing in ye, prob'ly, that's fetched out such a valentine. You can't go on always in this way without people finding it out."

Mrs. Wigglesworth made a grab at the offending valentine, but her husband caught it from her reach.

It was too good a thing to have destroyed thus early. So she snatched up the envelope instead, and would have rent that in twain, but her eyes fell upon the superscription, and she stopped in surprise.

"Why," she exclaimed, "it isn't for me at all!"

"Eh?" said Mr. Wigglesworth, looking up from the valentine, the grin yet ornamenting his features.

"I thought," returned his wife, steadily regarding the envelope, "that this said 'Mrs. E. Wigglesworth.'"

"Well, it does, doesn't it?" answered Mr. Wigglesworth. "What ye trying to act out?"

"It says 'Mr. E. Wigglesworth,'" cried his wife, breaking into smiles. "It is n't for me at all." And she clapped her hands.

Mr. Wigglesworth snatched the envelope and glared at it savagely. Then he dashed it into the gravy.

"I'm glad they did n't mean it for me," purred Mrs. Wigglesworth, her face wreathed in smiles, "but, oh, Ellery — he-he-he"

"He-he-he!" cackled Mr. Wigglesworth. "What's the use to act like an idiot? You think it smart, don't ye, to go and git up a silly joke like that?"

"Why" protested his wife, with a surprised air, "I hope you don't think, Ellery —"

"It don't make any difference what I think," stormed Mr. Wigglesworth from the front hall, what time he was working into his overcoat. "I've done nothing for all this year but slave around and support you, and now when this gash-flummuxed old silly valentine season comes around you take and work up

an insult on me. You 're so mean that I would n't be seen getting a divorce from ye."

"Why, Ellery," cried his wife, rushing toward the hall.

"Yah-yah-yah!" snarled Mr. Wigglesworth as he slammed the front door.

Chapter XXXIX

How Wigglesworth Went to the Fire

"'Where's the fire?' ejaculated Mr. Wigglesworth, puffing violently, 'Wot fires' this?' the policeman calmly made reply." — *Page 359.*

CHAPTER XXXIX. — *How Wigglesworth Went to the Fire*

THE cry of "Fire!" heard in the still hours at night smites the ear with startling force, and sickens the hearts of property owners. Apparently not appreciating this fact, a bibulous gentleman, faring uncertainly past the darkened house of Wigglesworth, lifted the upper part of his head with a hiccoughing gesture and projected his voice in a strident shriek:

"Fire!"

He then whooped once or twice and disappeared on the horizon.

"Ellery!" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, sitting up in bed.

"Wummpmhm?" Mr. Wigglesworth incoherently answered.

"Get up — get up at once!" called his wife, shaking him violently; "there's a fire!"

With one bound the half-awakened Wigglesworth was in the middle of the room clawing for his garments.

"What ye done with my clothes?" he exclaimed, waving his arms around in the darkness.

"They're on the chair, right where you left them," responded Mrs. Wigglesworth, making the answer that a wife always makes. "Oh, Ellery! Where do you suppose it is?"

"How do I know?" answered Mr. Wigglesworth roughly. "I hung it right on the bedpost when I undressed."

"I don't mean that," said Mrs. Wigglesworth. "I mean the fire. Where do you think, Ellery?"

"Where do I think?" repeated Mr. Wigglesworth, impaling himself on a bayonet belonging to the rocking-chair and lifting his voice into a shriek. "Where does anybody think that knows anything? Oh, my foot! my foot!"

"What ails your foot?" asked Mrs. Wigglesworth, straining her eyes through the darkness.

"What ails it?" howled Mr. Wigglesworth, picking up that poor, maimed member and hopping about the room with it, "what ye s'pose? Think it's got the measles, don't ye? Who put that rocking-chair 'side of my bed?"

"It is n't beside the bed," returned Mrs. Wigglesworth earnestly; "it's way over by the window."

"I know better!" yelled her husband. "I got right out of bed and the very first thing it up and kicked me — oh, my foot — my foot!" And he swayed to and fro, moaning.

"Can't you put something on it?" suggested Mrs. Wigglesworth, in a voice of sympathy.

"Put something on it?" snapped Mr. Wigglesworth angrily; "ain't that what I've been trying to do? Think I'm going out barefooted? Where ye hid my stockings?"

"They're on the bureau," said Mrs. Wigglesworth

"What ye put 'em there for?" growled Mr. Wigglesworth, and he crawled across the floor. Bringing his head in contact with the washstand, he broke forth afresh.

"Can't ye get out of bed and light that lamp?" he cried. "Think I want to go prowling 'round here till sunrise, knocking off things with my head?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth, thus adjured, tottered with a woman's unerring instinct to the bureau and broke a lamp chimney.

"That's the way!" said her husband, fiercely. "Put the pieces over here where I can step on em!"

"There's another one in the bathroom," Mrs. Wigglesworth replied.

When she got back with it and the lamp's rays illumined the room, a scene of desolation was made manifest. Mr. Wigglesworth had thrust himself into a pair of bicycle trousers belonging to Willie, one arm was invested in his wife's Spring cloak, and he sat in the centre of a great array of debris which, by the centripetal force of his hasty journeying, had been gathered in the middle of the apartment.

"Oh, Ellery!" wailed Mrs. Wigglesworth, appalled by the sight presented to her view; "what have you been doing?"

"What have I been doing?" repeated her husband, looking himself over with strong disgust. "I 'd like to have the answers to correspondent's man find out! Whose trousers are these?" he yelled, noting the garment's extreme brevity. "What kind of a thing's

this?" he added, plucking off the Spring cloak and stamping on it.

"Why," said Mrs. Wigglesworth, "that is my cloak, you know; and those are Willie's bicycle trousers."

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Wigglesworth, savagely, "what ye got me dressed up in 'em for?" What ye think it is, a masquerade ball?"

"I — I was taking them up attic," meekly replied Mrs. Wigglesworth, to put away for Winter, you know. I only laid them on the bureau over night. I don't see how you got them, way on the other side of the room so."

"I tell ye they was right here on my chair!" bullied Mr. Wigglesworth, "just where I left my things when I blew out the light. You changed 'em, that's what you did."

"How could I?" protested his wife; "you came to bed last."

"That's it — that's the way to argue!" snarled Mr. Wigglesworth; "mean to say I did it pro'bly. Got up in my sleep, likely, and went 'round changing 'em. Wigglesworth, the great sleep-walker. Remarkable instance of somnanbulism. Substitutes a pair of bicycle pants and appears in public. Going to write it up for the papers, ain't ye?"

Meantime he was shuffling out of the offending regalia and gradually accumulating, with the assistance of his wife, his accustomed wardrobe. The vest was in the bathroom, the stockings on the bureau, one of them having got involved with a comb, and

his other shoe was produced, after much thoughtful cogitation by Mrs. Wigglesworth, from the library, where her husband had slipped it off early in the evening for the relief of a familiar corn.

The slow movement of the types is not adequate to express the hurried action which characterized this vaudeville performance. Over all impended the weird, uncertain knowledge that somewhere in town valuable property — perhaps Mr. Wigglesworth's own — was going up in flame and smoke.

"Get out!" he cried, as his wife pressed a necktie upon him. "What ye s'pose I want that for?"

"You have n't got any cuffs," pleaded Mrs. Wigglesworth.

"Cuffs nothing!" snorted her husband; "what ye think it is, a Governor's reception? Think it's a church social, with pie, don't ye?"

"Hark!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigglesworth. "I thought I heard the fire engines! Is it the engines, Ellery?"

"Course it is!" he replied, hurrying into his coat. "Think it's an ice cream wagon this time of night? Get out the way, there!"

With a parting roar of excitement, Mr. Wigglesworth tore down the front stairs, and, with a whoop, went clattering up the street. A policeman leaned against a neighboring fence — thinking.

"Where's the fire?" ejaculated Mr. Wigglesworth, puffing violently.

"Wot fire's this?" the policeman calmly made reply.

When Mr. Wigglesworth had slowly remounted the stairs his breath had in a measure come back to him.

"Is it out?" anxiously queried his wife.

Mr. Wigglesworth silently snatched off his clothes and got into bed.

"Where was it, Ellery?" persisted Mrs. Wigglesworth.

Mr. Wigglesworth dashed both his fists into his pillow, and for an instant the room lit up with a lurid flash.

"Why, Ellery," sobbed Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I should think you would be ashamed to use such language."

Chapter XL

How Wigglesworth Made Butter

"Alexander, the cat, got upon a chair and watched Mr. Wigglesworth as he poured the milk into the churn."—*Page 366.*

CHAPTER XL.—*How Wigglesworth Made Butter*

"YA-A-A-H!" said Mr. Wigglesworth, in a great tone of disgust, "where'd ye get that butter? Must have come over in the Mayflower and swum ashore itself."

"I know it," rejoined Mrs. Wiggleswort, helplessly, as she poured the tea, "I never saw anything like it. Our regular butter man has failed us, you know, and this came from the market."

"Jail, you mean," retorted Mr. Wigglesworth, "I heard something had broken out up there. What ye want to put such grease on the table for, anyway? Think I want my neck dislocated trying to swallow that kind of stuff?"

"I'm sure," pleaded Mrs. Wigglesworth, "I don't see what I can do."

"Do!" echoed her husband in scorn, "what does anybody do when they get such stuff on hand? Give it to the charitable association, don't they? What's the matter with feeding it to that lambrequin dog the woman next door kisses before she goes to bed?"

"Isn't it dreadful?" cried Mrs. Wigglesworth, staying the tea pot in air; "to think of kissing such a horrid little brute."

"Why don't ye make your own butter?" pursued her husband, gloomily jabbing open another biscuit with his knife.

"Why, Ellery Wigglesworth!" exclaimed his wife putting down the tea pot and looking aghast.

"I don't see," growled Mr. Wigglesworth, shaking his head in an oracular manner, "what there is so wonderful about that. When I was a boy mother always used to make the butter. So did Mrs. Dodley. Why I've helped the Dodley twins churn by the hour. Me and Aleck Dodley was the best churners in town," concluded Mr. Wigglesworth, boastfully.

"I would n't know the first thing to do," said his wife; "I'd be sure to slop the milk all over my dress. I guess it would be better to buy the butter, Ellery."

"Oh, of course," sneered Mr. Wigglesworth, "that's the way — can't take a suggestion to save money. That's Mrs. Wigglesworth all over — rather spend every cent her hushand could earn than to try to practice a little economy just because he suggested the way to do it. If I had your mean disposition," Mr. Wigglesworth added bitterly as he flung away from the table, "I'd want to go out in the woods and die."

Mrs. Wigglesworth let fall a little tear or two and then took the butter firmly in both hands and bore it to the kitchen where it shortly afterwards fell off the refrigerator and injured a spine belonging to the family cat.

Concealed behind his paper Mr. Wigglesworth found the butter question reverting to his mind with much insistence. Visions of the Dodley twins and the merry plunk-plunk of the dasher came to him,

with all the hallowing association of boyhood's happy time. Mr. Wigglesworth's eyes glistened.

"I'm going to run up to Mrs. Wetherbee's," his wife said, appearing in the door. "I'll be back before bedtime."

The human mind moves at times with extraordinary swiftness. Mr. Wigglesworth possessed that kind of a mind and no sooner was his wife out of hearing than he rushed over to a woman next door and borrowed a churn that she had stored away in a far corner of the attic.

"You are welcome to it," said the woman next door, sweetly, "but I didn't know you were a butter maker, Mr. Wigglesworth."

That gentleman grinned.

"Sh!" he said hoarsely, "I'm going to surprise my wife. Oh, I've made thousands of pounds when I was a boy. Don't say anything about it — I'm going to surprise my wife."

It was an old-fashioned blue churn with the dasher projecting through a hole in the cover. Mr. Wigglesworth set it down on the kitchen floor and regarded it with admiration.

"I'll show 'em how to make butter!" he cried, the the light of a high purpose glowing in his face.

Then he looked into the refrigerator where several pans of milk lay glistening in their virgin whiteness.

"That's the stuff!" chuckled Mr. Wigglesworth as he pulled forth the pans, their contents flopping moistly against the tin sides and occasionally spring-

ing over and making exclamation marks down Mr. Wigglesworth's new navy blue trousers.

Alexander, the cat, got up in a chair and watched Mr. Wigglesworth as he poured the milk into the churn. Then he grasped the dasher and made a sudden stroke that spirted a stream of milk into his shirt front. Alexander did not understand the remark that Mr. Wigglesworth gave utterance to, although he had heard it before, but he had lived in the family long enough to realize that this was a fitting moment to get out of the chair and crawl under the cook-stove, and he did so.

"Plunk-plunk! — swash-swash!" went the dasher. Mr. Wigglesworth smiled. How the exercise carried him backward to those halcyon days. He could seem to hear again the voice of Mrs. Dodley as she called back the errant Aleck and harnessed him anew to his task.

Time, pursuing a custom for which it has long been celebrated, went on. Plunk-plunk! said the dasher. Swash-swash! went the turblent contents of the churn. Alexander gazed furtively from under the stove but said nothing.

A number of globules of perspiration stepped out on Mr. Wigglesworth's forehead and fell with a sharp report to the floor.

"What ails the blamed old stuff?" he muttered as he snatched off the cover and peered into the churn; "think I'm going to stand here poking away at this old broom handle all night? Why don't the butter come if it's going to?"

There was no answer to this interrogation and Mr. Wigglesworth, clapping on the cover, laid his blistering hands again to the dasher. Plunk-plunk! it sang monotonously on, while now and then a sharper stroke than usual would spatter a cupful of milk into Mr. Wigglesworth's countenance, and Alexander, listening, would shrink still farther under the stove.

The clock, which at first had stood still with astonishment, now noticed that with each added quarter hour the face of Mr. Wigglesworth took on a deeper purple hue and his breath came in short pants. Round and round the kitchen the wooded churn went waltzing, impelled by the vigor of Mr. Wigglesworth's remarks.

"Gash-flummux the miserable old watered milk!" he would yell, "why don't she harden if she's going to! Think's I'm a patent churn prob'ly, painted yaller! Wigglesworth, the new-fashioned rotary churn. Butter made in four minutes. County rights for sale cheap!"

And Mr. Wigglesworth's voice rose with each violent stroke of the dasher till it ended in a shriek, while his benumbed arms threatened to fall out at the shoulder.

Mrs. Wigglesworth and the woman next door met by the gate.

"I was coming over," said the woman next door, with an innocent air, "to borrow some of Mr. Wigglesworth's butter?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth lifted a pair of astonished eye-

brows and they hastened into the house. Nervously she flung open the kitchen door.

"That's the stuff!" Mr. Wigglesworth was screaming, apostrophizing the churn and mashing it with great violence against the stove; "that's the way to make butter without straws!" and he whirled the churn suddenly about and rammed into the set tubs with it; "butter of all kinds constantly on hand!" he shouted, kicking the churn with both feet while the procession was revolving on its axis; "hand-made butter furnished for summer resorts!" he shrieked as the heavily loaded churn nipped him against the refrigerator with great violence, and then with a concluding yell of rage he gripped the dasher and flung the churn aloft, when the cover pulled out and the milk with a cool gesture emptied itself over the top of Mr. Wigglesworth's bald organ of thought.

"Why, Ellery!" cried his wife, standing horror-stricken, while the woman next door peered fascinatedly over her shoulder,

"Don't you Ellery me!" shouted Mr. Wigglesworth, shaking his dripping fists. "Next time you get me to make your gash-flummuxed old butter you'll know it."

The woman next door whispered in Mrs. Wigglesworth's ear.

"Ellery," said that lady, "where did you get your milk?"

Mr. Wigglesworth glared at her fearfully.

"Get it?" he sneered, "got it out of the refriger-

ator, of course. Where d'ye s'pose? Think I got it out of the pump, pro'bly? Reckon it was sent by mail postpaid on receipt of price, don't ye?"

Mrs. Wigglesworth laughed.

"That was skim milk," she said, with an air of importance; "you ought to have had cream."

Mr. Wigglesworth dashed up stairs to the bathroom and for half an hour the thunder of his observations reverberated through the house.

"Good night," said the woman next door with great sweetness as she took leave of Mrs. Wigglesworth. "I can let you have a ball of butter in the morning if you are out."

Gradually the sound of Mr. Wigglesworth died away, while Alexander, laughing to himself in a soft manner, stole out from the stove and lapped contentedly at the milky way until morning.

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